

LEST I FORGET: AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

by

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A THESIS

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Lest I Forget is, at its core, a story of catharsis. It was born as a vessel to explore difficult feelings surrounding my experiences with friendships and family relationships gone awry. Within the structure of Hollywood scriptwriting, *Lest I Forget* functions as an exploration of various types of conflict and storytelling. In order to find inspirations, I researched various types of media that utilize Alzheimer's as a storytelling device, notably the album *Everywhere At the End of Time* and the TV show *Man on the Inside*. Both grasp the intricacies of the disease and spin both the audiences' and characters' perceptions of it to fit a cohesive narrative. As for the writing process, this script went through countless drafts. At the beginning, it was an entirely different story, missing almost all of its cast. But the main themes – coming of age and finding oneself — remained. Relationships are the driving force behind *Lest I Forget*. As the main character, Hazel, begins her journey into adulthood, she must face the natural progression of how people change. While the audience may not have experienced situations like what Hazel and the ensemble cast go through, I hope they will see a bit of themselves on the page. Healing and growth are long and non-linear processes.

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Artist Statement

In 2008, my maternal grandfather, Marvin Rossman, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. I do not remember it, but [he held a party and gave a speech extremely uncharacteristic of himself. It set off alarm bells for family members already worried about his aging brain. Over the course of the next seven years, his brain deteriorated, turning a brilliant, quick-witted man beloved by many into a shaking husk who could only communicate in grunts. He died at when he forgot how to breathe and function. His brain had died years before, leaving a body alive, but up for debate.

I was five years old when Grandpa was diagnosed. I remember fleeting snapshots of time spent with him, but not much more. I am not sure how many memories I retain of my own [mind] and how many come from stories I've been told. He and my grandma frequently picked me up after preschool, when my memory was still fluid and forming. I frequently find myself mourning the possibility of knowing him, even though he didn't pass until I was twelve. He lived in memory care homes for years before he died. While my family visited him often, my brother and I invented games specifically to avoid him. I remember vividly the two of us chasing each other around the perimeter of [name] Menlo Park's courtyard while Mom fed Grandpa mint chocolate chip ice cream in the center. I dreaded visits and counted the minutes until they ended, but after he died, I found myself wishing for even a moment more.

My grandmother, Betty Rossman, started showing signs of Alzheimer's around the time of Grandpa's death. I like to think she held on until he died, and not a moment longer. Visiting Grandpa was difficult because he had effectively become an unsettling stranger; he was a stranger who I felt a dedication to love without truly knowing him. I knew Grandma intimately, and knew exactly what I was missing as she slipped away.

Grandma's deterioration began simply with repeated lines, repeated conversations, and awkwardness. I struggled to answer the same question twice with the same honesty. She could not realize she was repeating herself and therefore did not deserve my annoyance. Sometimes I answered differently, changing my phrasing or even concepts as I realized better wording, but felt guilty for letting her believe the second answer was my first. I watched her personality twist through her [changing] reactions to TV we watched together each week. By the end, my dad had to make himself scarce, because she couldn't separate him from the faceless men she rampaged against. COVID shielded me from the end of her demise, but tripled the burden on my mom, who acted as both of my grandparents' caregivers and care managers. She watched my high school graduation on Zoom a couple days before she passed, after telling me years ago how excited she was to see me graduate.

My experience with Alzheimer's shaped most of my childhood. The toll it took on my grandparents as their minds eroded is imprinted across my brain, but the less flashy [but equally devastating effect] was the burden my mom and uncle shouldered as caretakers. It nearly wrecked their relationship. When choosing topics for my thesis, I pulled from subjects near and dear to my heart. Disease creates conflict. Jules is a poor parent, unrealistic to my life, but the unwanted [burden] Hazel shoulders stems straight from scenes I watched and experienced.

One of Hazel's other major conundrum comes from growing up. I have always struggled to make and keep friends, and found myself grieving the loss of friendships as we grew up and moved on. I met a girl who declared me her best friend in elementary school, but wordlessly abandoned me once we entered middle school. I clung to her, organizing hangouts and following her around during recess. It was only once I picked her up on the first day of seventh grade and she ditched me immediately for her new friends that I found it in me to let go of her. Even then,

it was a painful, non-linear process. High school is such a formative time in life – no wonder so many authors choose to write about it. Growing up requires change, no matter how painful it may be.

At its root, *Lest I Forget* is a story about change – changing minds, changing personalities, changing understandings of each other. Alder is perhaps the most stark example of change, representing an entirely new version of himself than the snippets Hazel remembers and invents. While flighty and nervous, he is stable and well-adjusted in a way that starkly contrasts almost every other character. While Hazel and her peers flounder with change, Alder represents the results. He went through the gauntlet, changing everyone's perception of him, and came out happy. Change is inevitable, but it is not something to be feared, no matter how painful it may be. Change is everything.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE PARLOR - EVENING

Enter on an elegantly decorated but cold, grand house with high ceilings and plenty of dark wood. No one is around except HAZEL, 15, a prim schoolgirl writing by hand at the table.

CYNTHIA, 46, the maid, sweeps around Hazel's feet. She is stout and visibly tired, but working without complaint.

HAZEL

I have no interesting family history to study.

CYNTHIA

I doubt that's true, miss.

HAZEL

You have worked for my family before I was born.

CYNTHIA

That I have, miss. I promise your family is quite interesting.

HAZEL

Give me inspiration.

CYNTHIA

The greatest stories are often discovered closest to home.

JULES

(offscreen)

Cynthia, prepare dinner posthaste.

Without missing a beat, Cynthia continues sweeping her way out of the room. She hesitates in the doorway, just out of sight from the living room.

CYNTHIA

(beat)

Best of luck.

After she leaves, Hazel stops writing and stares blankly at where she had once been.

HAZEL

What does that mean?

INT. MURRAY HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Hazel eats dinner with her mother, JULES, 58, a skinny and proper-looking woman in full makeup. Cynthia hovers behind them without seeming as if she was waiting.

They sit at a massive dining table designed for hosting guests, in a large, opulent room. Jules eats at the head with Hazel directly to her right. The rest of the table is empty.

Silence reigns for a couple minutes as they eat.

JULES

I received communication from your instructor today.

HAZEL

They did not contact me.

JULES

One wonders if you can be trusted to relay information, after the poor performance he informed me of.

HAZEL

I do not perform poorly and I tell you about every interaction.

JULES

You must exceed expectations on your next project or I will not allow you to luncheon with Skye.

HAZEL

Mother! Skye and I are plenty productive.

JULES

I need results.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ACADEMY - DAY

Students mill around on a green, neatly trimmed lawn, all in uniform. Hazel gets out of a sleek, hip for 1950's car driven by Cynthia.

SKYE, 15, a nervous and wiry student, runs to meet Hazel.

SKYE

Did you complete your mathematics assignment last night?

HAZEL

Of course. Would you like to review it in the library?

SKYE

Please. I struggled with it.

HAZEL

Mathematics was not hard. History took me more time.

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - DAY

A stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of the outside, the library is silent and empty except for Skye and Hazel, and the LIBRARIAN, a 30's woman who arranges books nearby. The

Skye and Hazel sit at a corner table, poring over books.

SKYE

Can you not write about the Hamletfield Oil Association?

HAZEL

I dissected my family's company for last year's economics report.

SKYE

There must be more you can examine.

HAZEL

What if we review exponent rules instead?

SKYE

Cheater.

HAZEL

A negative exponent in the denominator of a fraction is the same as a positive exponent in the numerator position.

SKYE

They go together, but it may not be immediately obvious.

HAZEL

Precisely. Exponents can be added or subtracted in multiplication.

SKYE

Thanks. We'll figure out your history report issue.

HAZEL

If only every problem was as simple as math. I need the right answer.

SKYE

Just write me a letter, like when we were kids.

HAZEL

You live next door.

SKYE

All the more fun.

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is old but well-maintained. All desks are made of nice, polished wood. Students sit two to a desk, separating them out into pairs.

Hazel and Skye sit in the front row as students file in. Included in the class are LILLIAN, 15, FIONA, 16, and EDEN, 15. They're as polished as Hazel and Skye but significantly more relaxed and confident in themselves.

EDEN

Another day of class.

FIONA

Only five more days until the next break. Weekends forever!

LILLIAN

Five days until the next party.

Hazel turns to Skye, ignoring the other students.

HAZEL

We must work together.

SKYE

Of course. I can speak to Mother and arrange a time for us.

HAZEL

Perfect.

EXT. HAMLETFIELD STREETS - DAY

Hazel and Skye walk home after school, up a steep hill. It's peppered with large houses like Hazel's, including Hazel's.

SKYE

Father told me I will miss our vacation if I do not raise my mathematics and geology grades.

HAZEL

He would not leave you behind.

SKYE

He is quite unhappy. He threw a vase yesterday.

HAZEL

What would the community think?

SKYE

I hope you are right. I want to visit the city.

HAZEL

I have never been.

SKYE

If I raise my grades enough, perhaps you can join us.

HAZEL

Without Mother? She would never let me go alone.

SKYE

Let her come, then.

HAZEL

She will never leave the company. Not even for a trip.

They arrive at Hazel's house and walk up the vast front yard.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE STUDY - DAY

The room is cozily lit by candles and well-stocked. Hazel flips frantically through an ornate, dusty book in a hidden corner. It's filled with family photos.

HAZEL

Where are you, Great-Aunt Mildred?

She scribbles something in a notebook.

HAZEL

(reading aloud)

Great-Aunt Mildred... born 1863.
Married an oil tycoon.

She flips the page.

HAZEL

Boring. Disappointing. Next!

Skye, now with rumpled clothes and messy hair, arrives with another armful of books.

SKYE

Don't speak ill of the dead. You never know who could be listening.

HAZEL

Five aunts in a row married oil tycoons. Have some variety, please.

SKYE

Your mom broke the pattern.

HAZEL

She's a dead politician's wife. I hardly think that's too different.

SKYE

All of my ancestors are coal miners. Yours are more interesting.

They lapse into silence and study.

SKYE

Great-Grandma had too many children. I
can't find anything on my third cousin
twice removed.

Hazel scoots over and peers over Skye's shoulder. She pours over
books and charts for a little while.

HAZEL

Is he Graham Morgan?

Skye checks her notes.

SKYE

That's him. Did you find him?

HAZEL

He's a woodworker in Virginia. Three
kids and five grandkids.

SKYE

Wow, I'll have to tell my mom. Hey,
you're missing your sister.

HAZEL

Oh. Laurel? I can't believe you
remember her.

SKYE

My father remembers. Or he remembers
your mom's resulting panic.

HAZEL

She never talks about Laurel anymore,
so neither do I.

Hazel pencils in something on her chart. It's nonsense.

HAZEL

I wish I knew her.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

After Skye leaves, Hazel tidies up the study.

JULES

Good, you're home. The dining room must be reorganized.

HAZEL

I have been home for a while. Did Cynthia not come today?

JULES

You know better than to talk back.

HAZEL

I wasn't- whatever. I will clean up.

JULES

No, complete your schoolwork.

Hazel and Jules work at parallel desks.

HAZEL

Can you tell me about Great-Aunt Mildred? It's for my history project.

JULES

My mother's sister. She could have married better than her bastard.

Hazel scribbles in her notes.

HAZEL

Her husband was very successful.

JULES

That is the bare minimum. You will find someone better, I am sure.

HAZEL

Who was she as a person?

JULES

Why does it matter? She brought our family money and prestige.

HAZEL

Through her husband.

JULES

Obviously.

(Beat)

She always had the latest fashions. My cousins always clamored over her dresses.

HAZEL

Did she let you have them?

JULES

I would never stoop to such a low. If Aunt Mildred gave them away, they were out of season.

(Beat)

She helped me with my studies in primary school.

HAZEL

She sounds thoughtful, then.

JULES

I suppose so. Not that she had much of a reason to be.

HAZEL

Why not?

JULES

I am always thoughtful.

HAZEL

Great-Aunt Mildred. Not you.

JULES

Who?

HAZEL

You were just telling me about her.

Jules stands up and shuts her notebook with a flourish.

JULES

I must call the maid for dinner. You attend to the dining room.

INT. ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY

The next day, Hazel and her classmates attend school. The bell rings, and students begin to file out. Another student, LILLIAN, slips in next to Skye.

TEACHER
Hazel Murray. A moment, please.

CALE
(muttered)
What could Jules Murray's daughter have
done to warrant trouble?

Hazel ignores the whispers.

SKYE
Should I wait for you?

LILLIAN
Wait, Skye! Let's go to the park! Let's
practice for my spelling bee.

SKYE
Sorry.

HAZEL
(to her back)
It's fine.
(to the teacher)
Whatever I've done, I promise it's just
a misunderstanding.

TEACHER
Trust me, I am not inclined to speak
with your mother.

HAZEL
And I don't want to bring her here.

The teacher places Hazel's family tree report, now neatly
organized and printed, in front of her.

TEACHER
I only want to protect you.

The teacher lays a finger on the branch next to Hazel, marked
'Laurel'.

TEACHER
Everyone in town knows your family. Why
make up a sibling?

HAZEL

I didn't make Laurel up. She left town when I was young.

TEACHER

You understand I can't pass you for a creative writing project.

HAZEL

Laurel is real. Skye remembers her.

TEACHER

Listen closely. I am only looking out for both of our safeties.

(Beat)

If the town- if your mother does not speak of your sister, she does not exist.

The teacher draws a line through Laurel's name and hands Hazel her report back.

TEACHER

If you return this to me tomorrow before class without Laurel, I won't dock any points.

Hazel tucks the report into her bag.

HAZEL

I cannot fail.

TEACHER

Go home. Before she notices you're gone.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE FOYER - DAY

Hazel enters as quietly as possible.

CYNTHIA

Your mother is waiting for you.

HAZEL

Understood, thank you.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Jules is seated in an armchair, facing away from Hazel.

JULES

Why are you late? Were you fraternizing
with the poors?

HAZEL

Just speaking with my teacher.

JULES

You should have no need to. Are your
grades not exemplary?

HAZEL

You've seen my report cards.

JULES

If you talk back to your future
partners, they will not like you.

HAZEL

Sorry. My grades are good. My teacher
just had a question.

JULES

You must pass fifth grade.

HAZEL

I am in seventh grade.

JULES

Just write more clearly, so your
teachers never doubt your skills.

HAZEL

Of course. I will take it as a learning
opportunity.

At that, Jules finally smiles. It's the tiniest of smirks.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel sits by the door, watching for the light to go away. When
it does, she grabs a candle and slips out.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - LAUREL'S OLD BEDROM - NIGHT

Hazel enters carefully, shutting the door behind her. She lights a candle and looks around. The room is covered in a small layer of dust, as if well- but infrequently- maintained

Hazel imagines a ghost of Laurel, MIND-LAUREL, an amalgamation of the little Hazel remembers of her and

MIND-LAUREL

You know Mother would never waste an opportunity to entertain guests. Yet she never opens this room.

Hazel slips around the room, opening drawers, turning back covers, and rifling through books.

MIND-LAUREL

I spent so much time here.

Hazel opens the closet door. She flicks through the meager clothes left behind, all dresses, petticoats, and skirts.

LAUREL (V.O.)

Who was I?

INT. ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Students file in before class starts. Hazel silently passes her assignment off to the teacher, who gives her a nod.

SKYE

You're not in trouble, right?

LILLIAN

(to Skye)

Did you do the reading?

HAZEL

I have some investigating to do.

(Beat)

Alone, it seems.

Skye doesn't react. The teacher begins class, and all of them turn their attention to their studies.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel once again enters the unoccupied bedroom. She rummages through the desk drawers but jerks away when something pricks her finger.

HAZEL

Ow! Are you that determined to hurt me,
Laurel?

She sucks at her finger. The candle rattles unsteadily in her other, non-dominant hand.

HAZEL

Mother would never allow splintering
wood in her house.

Shaking out her thumb, she clumsily sifts through the drawer, more focused this time.

HAZEL

Is this a journal? I journal too.

She flips through it.

HAZEL

(reading aloud)

"I know in my heart I cannot stay here.
I am not the person I am meant to be."

(as herself)

Poetic.

She sets the book down and caresses her finger again.

HAZEL

I never remember you being unhappy.
Frankly, I don't remember much of you.
Maybe I'm wrong.

She picks up the book again.

HAZEL

(reading aloud)

She leaves. The desk drawer is still open, with papers sticking out.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Hazel returns home from school. She unpacks her books from her backpack.

MAID

Miss, a word of advice, if I may.

HAZEL

(surprised)

Your insight is always welcome.

MAID

Cover your tracks better.

The maid walks away, leaving Hazel puzzled in her wake.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel upturns the room, a little more nervously than before.

HAZEL

It looks the same as before. I didn't
leave anything, did I?

LAUREL (V.O.)

Mother always knows.

She tips her candle under the bed. Wax drips onto the carpet.

LAUREL

Now she will definitely know. Clean
that up.

She scrapes it off with a cloth. Chunks of the carpet come out,
but she smooths them over.

HAZEL

The room is so dusty. No one should be
in here. How did they notice?

LAUREL

Did you miss something else?

Hazel blows out her candle and makes to leave the room. At the
last second, she backtracks and grabs the notebook she had read
from.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

After dinner, Hazel and Jules retire to their armchairs to read. They sit in silence for a while.

JULES

Be careful around candles. Items around them can catch fire so easily.

HAZEL

Are you speaking from your book?

Jules holds up a piece of paper - an old essay, dated ten years ago and titled with Laurel Murray. The edge is barely singed, with a hint of wax.

JULES

Your principal told me your teacher submitted your project a day later than it was due.

HAZEL

I turned it in on time. He deemed it unsatisfactory. I fixed it.

JULES

Your work should never be unsatisfactory in the first place.

Jules crumples the paper.

JULES

Perhaps it would help your studies to focus on them instead of a closed room.

HAZEL

It actually is relevant--

JULES

Or you would be more successful if you slept through the night, as doctors recommend.

HAZEL

If you would just listen to me, we could solve this whole problem--

JULES

I work incredibly hard to hold this family's station.

(Beat)

Especially after your father left us
alone.

Hazel nods.

JULES

My station is your station. This
benefits you.

(Beat)

Do not embarrass me again.

She holds up the crumpled paper.

JULES

I read your essay myself. I agree it is
unsatisfactory. Do better.

HAZEL

That is Laurel's essay.

JULES

Do not speak that name.

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - DAY

It is empty. Hazel flips frantically through encyclopedias.

LIBRARIAN

Here is the project archive you
requested, miss.

Hazel jerks out of her stupor.

HAZEL

Thank you. From ten years ago, yes?

The librarian nods and hands the files over. Hazel immediately
starts reading, but the librarian hovers.

LIBRARIAN

If I may be so candid, Miss...
(beat)

HAZEL

(slightly annoyed)
Yes?

LIBRARIAN

You understand you will complete some of these assignments this year, yes?

HAZEL

Yeah, but we haven't gotten there yet.

LIBRARIAN

I can't help you cheat.

HAZEL

No- No, I would never!

LIBRARIAN

I should hope so.

HAZEL

Definitely not. I'm just- I'm looking for my sister's work.

LIBRARIAN

You can't find this at home?

HAZEL

My mother is- you know how my mother is.

LIBRARIAN

Everyone in this town does.

HAZEL

She keeps everything of Laurel's under lock and key.

LIBRARIAN

Sounds about right.

(beat)

Why do you need your sister's coursework so badly?

HAZEL

My assignment in personal history would not be complete without her.

LIBRARIAN

Is your mother agreeable to this research? Could you not stick with other family members?

HAZEL

Please trust me. Laurel is an integral part of my project.

LIBRARIAN
It's your funeral.

HAZEL
It'll be fine.

LIBRARIAN
Just be careful.

The librarian leaves. Hazel turns back to the file, flipping through until she finds Laurel's essays

HAZEL
(after she's gone)
I will, thanks.
(beat)
So I need to make sure not to write about the economics of a successful coffee shop for my financials paper this year. Got it.

Bells sound from outside.

Hazel looks up, then shrugs and returns to her work. She is painstakingly copying Laurel's paper by hand.

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - LATER

Hazel continues studying. The librarian packs up. The library is still empty, save for Skye.

SKYE
Why weren't you in class?

Hazel continues writing without looking at Skye.

HAZEL
Studying.

SKYE
The teacher asked about you. You didn't call out?

HAZEL
Too busy.

SKYE

What are you working on?

HAZEL

Project about my family. As always.

Skye hesitates for a minute.

SKYE

Well, I am going to go home. You should
leave soon too.

HAZEL

Soon, yeah.

Skye leaves. Hazel continues studying.

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - LATER

It's dark outside the windows now. Hazel finally snaps the
folder shut and packs up. She looks for the librarian, but she
has gone home. Candles around the library are extinguished.

Hazel approaches the front desk and lays the folder on top.

HAZEL

(sheepish)

Thank you for your help.

INT. ACADEMY HALLWAYS - DUSK

Hazel walks through empty, pristine hallways, alone.

EXT. ACADEMY GREEN - DUSK

Hazel walks through the outside of the academy.

EXT. SUBURB STREETS - DUSK

Hazel walks home, in her own world.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DUSK

Hazel walks down her massive street. Her steps are much slower
here.

HAZEL

(under her breath, to
herself)

Yes, Mother, I understand I am home
late.

(beat)

I was only at the library, studying for
my latest project.

(best)

Yes, I understand I can study at home.
I needed a specific tome the library
carries.

(beat)

Yes, I understand I could have taken it
home. It is quite large. I did not wish
to walk home burdened.

(beat)

Yes, Mother, I am sorry. I will do
better next time.

She pauses in front of her front lawn.

LAUREL

She can see you from here.

She walks up the driveway to the doorstep.

HAZEL

Into the lion's den.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - FOYER - DUSK

Hazel puts away her school supplies and takes off her coat - her
normal routine, as if it were a time.

The maid rushes by, pausing in the doorway.

HAZEL

You can inform her I am here.

The maid leaves without entering the room.

LAUREL

She knows already.

JULES

(from another room)

Hazel, come here.

She starts to leave, but hesitates in the doorway. She grabs the folder out of her bookbag that contains the essay she copied - small, black and inconspicuous - and tucks it into a bag in the corner.

HAZEL

Just in case.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DUSK

Jules stands behind the head of the table with her hands resting on the back of the chair. The table is set with an impeccably presented traditional dinner spread, untouched, even though it is past dinnertime. Behind her, the maid bustles in the kitchen.

JULES

Please aid your dear, aging mother. I seem to have forgotten.

(beat)

What time are you meant to be home from school?

Hazel faces Jules at the other end of the table, ramrod straight, far too large for the two of them. This table place is not set, unlike Jules'.

HAZEL

I am to return immediately after the end of classes.

JULES

Yet look around yourself.

Jules gestures to the set table and the windows, with curtains still drawn to reveal darkness outside.

JULES

You are a smart student. Does this appear to be just after the end of classes to you?

HAZEL

No, it is nighttime.

JULES

Look at the meal I have been patiently waiting to share.

HAZEL

I eat alone every night you are out
with the church ladies.

JULES

I am networking to ensure our continued
social standing. It is for your
benefit.

(beat)

I do all of this for your benefit, and
how do you repay me?

(before Hazel can answer)

With loneliness and disrespect!

Hazel moves to the chair at Jules' right, the only other place
set.

HAZEL

Thank you.

They eat in silence. The maid attends to them, also silent. The
only sounds are the clinking of their silverware.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Hazel and Jules have mostly finished their meal; Jules still has
a little more food on her plate.

HAZEL

May I be excused?

JULES

Go directly to the drawing room. Work
on your studies.

Jules watches her closely as she leaves the room.

JULES

I will be right behind you.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Hazel slips past the drawing room. She grabs her bookbag and
tucks the bag with the essay further behind the coat rack.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Jules reads while Hazel dutifully writes her project.

JULES

Your Great Aunt Mildred was quite the delinquent when she was younger, I am told.

Hazel quickly shuffles papers around to find her notebook.

HAZEL

How so?

JULES

She would sneak out at night to attend friends' houses and parties.

(beat)

But it only brought her strife. She became enamored with a boy who only wanted her for her family name.

Hazel hastily scribbles down every word.

JULES

Write neatly, dear.

HAZEL

Of course. My apologies.

JULES

She was heartbroken.
But her parents found her an advantageous match.

HAZEL

Did they love each other?

JULES

Who loves one another? You value love too highly.

Hazel doesn't answer, but she is visibly hurt. Jules does not notice.

JULES

I will read over your project before you turn it in. For safety.

INT. ACADEMY HALLWAYS - DAY

Hazel approaches Skye before classes begin. Skye was walking with an older classmate.

LILLIAN

See you next Saturday, at Fiona's house? She will be serving duck.

SKYE

I will be there.

Skye waves as they break away. Hazel fills their gap.

HAZEL

Did you get home safely? I apologize for not accompanying you.

SKYE

(distracted)

What?

She's watching the older classmate take their seat.

SKYE

I was fine, thank you. Fiona and Eden accompanied me.

(beat)

We went to a lovely coffee shop.

HAZEL

That sounds nice. I made it home safely as well.

SKYE

Good to hear! It was nice since you and I never go to such places.

HAZEL

My mother wouldn't like it.

SKYE

I am aware.

(beat)

Did you finish your project?

HAZEL

The part I was working on, yes.

They reach the classroom.

INT. ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - CONTINUED

Skye and Hazel enter and take their seats.

SKYE
Well, good luck.

Lillian enters with a pack of friends and sits at a desk in the corner.

LILLIAN
Skye, come sit with us.

HAZEL
She already sat here.

Skye hurriedly packs up her things.

SKYE
Sorry. You understand, right?

Hazel watches as Skye moves over to sit by Lillian. They immediately start chatting animatedly.

HAZEL
I understand.

The classroom slowly fills up. The seat next to Hazel is never taken. The teacher begins lessons, yet the desk remains empty.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

The students file into the cafeteria for lunch. Hazel tags onto one of her classmates.

EDEN
Did you hear about Fiona's party?

FIONA
You are all invited.

SKYE
I can't wait.

Hazel turns to another classmate.

HAZEL
Are you going to the party?

Most classmates turn away from her, so she keeps trying.

CALE

Yeah, for next weekend? Everyone is.
Except you.

HAZEL

We'll see about that.

CALE

I could help you... for a price.

HAZEL

You're disgusting.

Hazel walks away, but we stay with the classmates.

CALE

You didn't invite Hazel, right?

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - NIGHT

Hazel stews in her room.

HAZEL

(to herself)

How dare he assume I need his favors!
Who wouldn't invite me?

MIND-LAUREL

You've never been invited to a single
party in your life.

HAZEL

I'm sure that was only a simple
oversight! Fiona wants me there.

(beat)

You must have gone to so many parties.
Give me advice.

She ruffles through her bag and grabs one of Laurel's essays.

HAZEL

(reading aloud in Laurel's
voice, with Mind-Laurel
watching)

The character of Bargaboa the Third
offers a foil to the protagonist.

Bargaboa is completely self-assured,
creating tension between the
protagonist's insecurity in themselves.

(beat)

However, the subtext indicates that
Bargaboa was once unsure of themselves,
just like the protagonist. They had to
find who they were and stay true to it
despite social pressure to conform.

MIND-LAUREL

(her own words)

Just be yourself.

HAZEL

I'm not the biggest fan of duck, so
maybe I should refuse it.

(beat)

The teacher's note... ouch. D plus?

MIND-LAUREL

They didn't value my genius.

HAZEL

(reading aloud)

Your reading of Bargaboa is
inappropriate. Any more and I will be
forced to involve your mother.

HAZEL

(her own words)

Mother must not have been pleased.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel and Jules speak in the sitting room.

JULES

I have noted your increased dedication
to your studies lately.

(beat)

Therefore, I decree you may visit Skye
for some recreation.

INT. SKYE'S HOME - DAY

The next day, Hazel walks up to Skye's home, alone.

SKYE'S MOTHER
Welcome, dear! Did you get lost?

HAZEL
No, I'm here for Skye.

SKYE'S MOTHER
Skye's still out. We can telegram the
shop for you.

Before Hazel can answer, Skye, Lillian, and Eden enter.

HAZEL
Good, you're here.

LILLIAN
(to Skye)
Did you invite her here?

SKYE
We haven't spoken since yesterday.

HAZEL
Time for you to go home, then?

EDEN
I should probably leave. My mother
isn't feeling well.

LILLIAN
(to Hazel)
Isn't your mother looking for you?

Eden and Lillian leave.

SKYE
I thought you would be studying.

HAZEL
Mother gave me a break.

SKYE
She dictates my life, not just yours?

HAZEL
Don't be silly.

INT. HAZEL'S ROOM - DAY

It's the day of the party. Cynthia helps Hazel get ready, but she doesn't know what she's doing.

HAZEL

This dress might be nice.

CYNTHIA

What kind of party is it?

HAZEL

Are all parties not the same?

CYNTHIA

No, dear. The dress code and expectations vary.

(beat)

Did you receive a physical invitation?

HAZEL

Maybe it got lost.

CYNTHIA

You don't need to attend.

INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Hazel approaches the driveway and knocks.

FIONA'S FATHER

Hazel Murray. What a surprise.

HAZEL

A surprise?

FIONA'S FATHER

(beat)

Absolutely not. I must be misinformed.

INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Hazel passes him and runs inside. The house is packed with students, including Cale, Eden, Lillian, and Skye.

FIONA'S FATHER

(to Fiona's mother)

Could you find our daughter?

Hazel floats through the party, searching for Skye. As she passes through, her classmates whisper about her.

CALE

What is she doing here?

CLASSMATE 2

Did her mom pay off Fiona?

CLASSMATE 3

Do you think Skye invited her?

CLASSMATE 4

I heard she broke into Skye's house.

CLASSMATE 5

I always knew Skye wasn't cool.

Hazel walks up to a group of girls from her class. They're all dressed much more casually than her.

CLASSMATE 6

So then I heard she- oh. Hazel. Excuse me, I need to talk to Fiona.

The group disperses, leaving Hazel alone.

She repeats the process with a couple of other pods. All end the same way.

Hazel spots Skye and beelines for her. Cale gets in her way.

CALE

Still time for you to do me a favor.

Fiona rings a bell.

FIONA

Dinner is served, friends.

INT. FIONA'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Her father frantically pulls her aside as students file into the dining room. Each place is labeled with a name card. Hazel searches for hers, but does not find it.

FIONA

(directly to Hazel)

Unfortunately, my family is not
infinitely wealthy.

The whispers and clamors of natural conversation go silent
around them; everyone is watching the confrontation.

HAZEL
I'm sorry. That is unfortunate.

FIONA
Duck is incredibly expensive.

HAZEL
It's very kind of your parents to offer
to go without.

FIONA'S FATHER
(in the background)
Words in my mouth.

FIONA
I cannot believe I have to spell it
out. You were not invited. We don't
have a place for you. Leave.

HAZEL
But I need to be here.
(beat; she searches the room)
Skye is here.

EDEN
(to Skye)
So you did invite her. Snake.

SKYE
I didn't tell her anything.

EDEN
She and Hazel were together after we
left yesterday.

LILLIAN
I trusted you.

SKYE
I don't care about her.

HAZEL
But we have been friends forever.

FIONA
You're ruining my party. Get out.

EXT. FIONA'S FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Fiona shoves Skye and Hazel out and locks the door. A woman runs down the street.

FIONA
Now you cause weird people to hang around my house.

HAZEL
Do you want to come over? We could study together.

SKYE
Right now. Have you no shame?

HAZEL
They just kicked us out. How am I losing to them?

SKYE
I got one chance to have a normal life and a normal friendship, without you and your mom weighing me down, and you ruin it for me.

HAZEL
I weigh you down?

Skye stalks away, leaving Hazel alone on the yard.

SKYE
Don't contact me again.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE FOYER - NIGHT

Hazel slams the door and dumps her coat on the hangar - furious, but far more restrained than most people would be.

CYNTHIA
Did the party finish early?

HAZEL
Your advice was terrible.

JULES

Tell me you did not embarrass me.

Hazel tries to get around her, up the stairs, but Jules blocks her path.

JULES

Answer me. I raised you better.

HAZEL

Clearly, your influence is causing me nothing but trouble.

JULES

You take that back immediately.

(beat)

If I find you've lost me a business opportunity, I will send you to boarding school.

HAZEL

I guess I'll pack my bags, then.

INT. HAZEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hazel curls up on her bed, crying, clutching Laurel's book of essays.

HAZEL

Why didn't you teach me about this.

(beat)

Did you leave because Mother is terrible and stifling, too?

(beat)

Or did you simply know better from the start?

INT. HAZEL'S ROOM - DAY

At her desk, Hazel sits her head in her hands. She's dreaming, but we don't know that yet. LAUREL, as Hazel remembers her - a cool, collected teenager, appears.

HAZEL

I can never come back from this. I will never go to school again.

LAUREL

Don't talk like that. School is easy;
I'll show you.

Laurel slides in beside Hazel with another desk chair.

LAUREL

You just have to be nice to them and
they'll be nice to you back.

HAZEL

I tried that.

LAUREL

No, you must actually speak with them
first. Here, I'll show you.

INT. ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Laurel holds Hazel's hand, gently pulling her through the crowd
of students.

EDEN

Hi Laurel!

LAUREL

How is your mother doing?

EDEN

Better, thanks. The doctors say she'll
be healed by the fall.

Laurel pulls Hazel along further.

LAUREL

Show you care about their lives.

HAZEL

But I don't.

LAUREL

They don't have to know that.

They stop again.

LILLIAN

Laurel! Great to see you!

LAUREL
How did your spelling bee go?

LILLIAN
I won!

Laurel and Hazel keep moving.

LAUREL
Remember details they've told you, and
follow up later.

They stop again.

HAZEL
I can't do this.

FIONA
Laurel, great to see you!

LAUREL
Sorry I missed your party.

FIONA
I'm throwing another on Saturday.

LAUREL
Great, we'll be there.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - FOYER

Laurel and Hazel walk inside, as if they came from school.

LAUREL
That easy.

JULES
Girls! Welcome home.

She floats around them and kisses them both on their cheeks.

JULES
Skye's family is coming over, so please
wash up posthaste.

Hazel tugs Laurel to the side; Jules doesn't seem to notice.

HAZEL

But Skye's mad at me.

LAUREL
Just say you're sorry.

The doorbell rings. Jules gasps over-dramatically.

SKYE'S MOTHER
Thank you for having us!

SKYE'S FATHER
Laurel, so wonderful to see you.

Jules and Skye's parents start chatting, leaving Skye and Hazel facing each other in the doorway.

HAZEL
Sorry about this weekend.

Skye throws her arms around Hazel.

SKYE
It's okay. I'm just happy to be your friend.

JULES
You're meeting up with Skye? Don't worry about your chores, dear.

LAUREL
I'll help with your homework.

Hazel beams, squeezing Laurel tight.

HAZEL
Thank you so much! This is too good to be-

INT. HAZEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hazel lies in bed, still in her day-clothes, hugging Laurel's journal.

HAZEL
-True.

She cries herself back to sleep.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Jules tosses a bundle of letters at Hazel.

JULES
Take out the mail.

HAZEL
This is from last week.

JULES
Then bring today's mail in.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Hazel rifles through the mailbox.

HAZEL
Bill, bill, calling card from the
mayor, bill, article? With no

Hazel runs inside.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Jules reads, unbothered.

HAZEL
(from outside)
Mother!

She slams open the door and stops to catch her breath.

JULES
A Murray does not shout.

Hazel waves the letter.

Jules snatches the article out of Hazel's hand. It's by far the fastest we've seen her move. She scans it and crumples it up when she's finished reading.

JULES
Ungrateful brat.

HAZEL
I'll write back.

JULES
She's dead to us.

HAZEL
You write to her.

JULES
Go to bed, Hazel.

HAZEL
It's three in the afternoon. I haven't
had dinner yet.

Jules yanks the curtains shut, bathing the room in darkness.

JULES
I said, go to bed.

(1) malykiah (2) reese (3) julianne (4) ella (5) arden

(1) orion (2) isaiah (3) sarah (4) logan (5) josiah (6) ziaire
(7) cooper (8) liv (9) sandor

(1) orion (2) malykiah (1) logan (2*) sarah (2) julianne (1)
isaiah (2) reese (1*) josiah (2) ella

N/A (yet): (1) ziaire (1) cooper (1) liv (1) sandor (2) arden

Likely to travel again: orion (ggb), malykiah (ggb), isaiah
(ygb), reese (ygb), ella (senior), julianne (cracked), sarah
(sl)

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - DAY

Students congregate in little groups. Hazel weaves through,
looking for Skye, but finds Fiona.

FIONA
Stay away from us.

HAZEL
I am not looking to speak with you.

LILLIAN

She doesn't want to talk to you, freak.
Leave us alone.

HAZEL

Are you her keepers? Are they correct,
Skye?

FIONA

Stop and think about someone other than
yourself for once.

HAZEL

I am thinking of Skye right now.

LILLIAN

No, you are worried for your own
reputation and social life.

FIONA

Do you know who is worried about their
reputation? Me. My family's reputation
is in the trash after your family's
stunt last night.

HAZEL

It was only supposed to be me.

FIONA

My family will lose clients because the
townspeople think we are untrustworthy.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - EVENING

Hazel enters. Cynthia is somewhere else. Jules runs down the
stairs.

JULES

Where have you been?

HAZEL

Studying. You told me two days ago I
could stay late to make my essay the
best it can be.

JULES

You have been grounded for a month for unsatisfactory scores on your math exams.

HAZEL

That is a falsehood. You were upset with my personal history essay.

JULES

I would certainly remember such a thing. Have you joined a gang?

HAZEL

Maybe you are hysteric.

JULES

Make sure you pick the gang with the cleanest reputation.

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - DAY

The students are working quietly on their assignments.

LILLIAN

You can't sit here.

HAZEL

This table has the only open seats in the library.

FIONA

Skye can't focus with you here.

HAZEL

Don't speak for her.

LILLIAN

Teacher! Hazel is distracting Skye.

TEACHER

Hazel, please remove yourself.

HAZEL

Fine. I can't focus either.

She backs away.

LILLIAN

Farther. Farther. Farther.

Hazel steps into the doorway.

LILLIAN

Farther.

INT. TOWN LIBRARY - DAY

The library is filled with quiet patrons of all ages. ALDER, a young man in his twenties, reshelves nonfiction books.

HAZEL

Find me your cleanest town government reference book.

ALDER

Cleanest? That's the first I've heard of a request like that.

HAZEL

This is the public library.

ALDER

Should I be offended? I clean all the books myself.

HAZEL

Right. Sorry.

ALDER

I'm just messing with you. But the books are clean, I promise.

He hands Hazel a couple of books.

ALDER

Here is a census volume from the 1800s. This is from the 1700s.

HAZEL

Thanks. A census has a lot of information, right?

ALDER

If you tell me what you're looking for, I can be of more help.

HAZEL
Good friends.

ALDER
I'm sure you can find those here.

HAZEL
I didn't mean to say that out loud.

ALDER
We do have lovely community groups. I
lost my entire support system when I
was around your age.

HAZEL
Oh, I'm sorry.

ALDER
The library helped me.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel comes home from school.

HAZEL
Hello, mother. How was your day?
Jules ignores her.

HAZEL
Was it bad?

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Jules sits down to read.

HAZEL
What a good idea.

As soon as Hazel sits down, Jules leaves.

HAZEL
Where are you going?

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jules gets in Cynthia's way.

CYNTHIA

Are you all right, Hazel?

JULES

We are not speaking to Hazel right now.
She has not earned it.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Hazel and Jules eat dinner in silence.

HAZEL

How do I earn the right to speak with
you? What have I done wrong?

JULES

You must prove your maturity.

Jules leaves, even though her place is clear. Hazel looks at the
third empty place at the table. She hallucinates her long-lost
sister standing behind the chair.

MIND-LAUREL

If even Mother is not happy with your
conversational skills, you are in
trouble.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE YARD - DAY

The maid and Jules argue in the parlor, loud enough for the
neighbors to hear.

CYNTHIA

Ma'am, as I told you, I bought new
cushions on your orders.

JULES

I did not ask you to do that. I would
never ask you to. You lie to cover up
your own mistakes.

CYNTHIA

I can provide bank statements.

Jules crumples the paper.

JULES

Fabrications and lies.

CYNTHIA

You signed off on these.

Hazel enters, coming home from school.

JULES

Tell Cynthia her failures will not be tolerated.

HAZEL

Failures? Cynthia is lovely.

JULES

She disobeyed my commands.

CYNTHIA

I quit. Good luck, kid.

Cynthia storms out, leaving Hazel and Jules alone.

HAZEL

I can convince her to come back. Maybe if you apologize.

JULES

Clean up around here. Someone needs to. This is your fault.

HAZEL

How is it my fault?

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel sorts through the mail.

HAZEL

Mother, we received a letter from Great-Aunt Mildred.

JULES

(from the other room)
Leave it on my drawing room desk.

Hazel starts to, but stops at the last minute.

HAZEL

It's addressed to me.

JULES

Aunt Mildred would never write to you.
Leave it for me.

Hazel glances around superstitiously, then opens the letter.

MILDRED

(V.O.)

"Attached is the front page of the
Hamletfield Herald this morning.
"Murray Matriarch Hysteric at High
School Party". You must know the
precarious position this will put the
family in. With your father gone, we
are already under more scrutiny. You
must keep your mother under control. If
you cannot, I will send the two of you
to a doctor in Whitfield. Best of
luck."

HAZEL

Mother is not hysteric.

JULES

(from the other room)

Why are there gray sheets on my bed? I
have told you a thousand times I only
sleep in silver.

HAZEL

I'll fix it.

She slips the letter into her pocket.

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is asleep. Hazel writes in her diary.

HAZEL

Stupid Alexandria. She couldn't stay in
her lane.

MIND-LAUREL

We never should have gone to that
party.

HAZEL

Now you tell me.

MIND-LAUREL

Would Great-Aunt Mildred send Mother to Fiona's family? They are renowned mental doctors.

HAZEL

I cannot let that happen. Fiona would certainly tell everyone.

MIND-LAUREL

She would only need to tell Lillian. Lillian would tell everyone.

HAZEL

Skye would never speak to me again.

MIND-LAUREL

You cannot tell Great-Aunt Mildred the truth.

HAZEL

How can I lie?

MIND-LAUREL

Just wait for Mother to get better on her own. Surely, it's just a passing phase.

HAZEL

Great-Aunt Mildred would send me away, too. I could not stay here.

MIND-LAUREL

You would never be able to stay friends with Skye if you left.

HAZEL

I will pen the letter posthaste. "Dear Great-Aunt Mildred, that article is a bunch of hogwash. The reporter was simply lying."

MIND-LAUREL

I hope this works.

The camera pans over Hazel writing the letter she had narrated, then Laurel's old journal, dated eleven years ago. It reads,

"Mother was especially cruel today. I hope this is just a passing phase, and she will be sunny again soon."

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

All of the students arrive before classes begin, whispering to each other.

EDEN
Have you seen this?

LILLIAN
I never would have guessed.

FIONA
I did. And she ruined me.

SKYE
It's pretty easy to tell.

Hazel walks in. All the whispers stop immediately.

HAZEL
Is there something on my face.

SKYE
Come with me, we should talk.

Lillian elbows around Skye and shoves the newspaper in Hazel's face.

LILLIAN
Now there is. Have you seen this? Is it true?

HAZEL
(reading aloud)
Murray Matriarch Hysteric... This is inescapable.

EDEN
Was Alexandria really here for you?

SKYE
I thought she was running a fluff piece on the Academy.

HAZEL

I believe she is opportunistic. Believe me, it's not true. My mother is in full control of her mental facilities.

EDEN

When you talk like that, I think you're not in control of your "mental facilities".

EXT. ACADEMY GREEN - DAY

After school, everyone exits. Hazel chases after Skye.

ALEXANDRIA

Care to comment on my latest article? I trust you've read it.

HAZEL

Why would you lie about us?

ALEXANDRIA

I only report what I see.

HAZEL

I was under the impression that your task is to write about class.

ALEXANDRIA

When I see a bigger opportunity, I take it.

LILLIAN

Good business strategy.

SKYE

She says, 'No comment.' Right?

HAZEL

Right. No comment.

ALEXANDRIA

Suit yourself.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Skye and Hazel escape inside.

HAZEL

Are we talking again?

SKYE

I'm still mad at you. Do you want
whipped cream?

HAZEL

Mom slashed my allowance.

SKYE

I know. I'm buying. Do you want whipped
cream?

HAZEL

I don't know.

SKYE

(to the barista)
She'll have the whipped cream.

They sit down.

SKYE

My parents are worried. They think
you're a bad influence.

HAZEL

Do you believe it?

SKYE

Your mother is very hysterical.

HAZEL

You can't. She's fine.

ALDER

Here are your drinks. Please let me
know if you need anything else.

HAZEL

The librarian?

ALDER

The blunt girl from the other day. I
work two jobs.

SKYE

You braved the public library?

ALDER
Two blunt girls.

SKYE
I'm just surprised for her.

ALDER
I can also be of research help. Your project sounds interesting.

HAZEL
How do you know what our project entails?

SKYE
The library sounds like a good place to start.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Skye and Hazel research.

SKYE
Would it be so bad if she got treatment for her hysteria?

HAZEL
I can't let that happen.

SKYE
It could save her reputation, if the townspeople saw her recover.

HAZEL
No one recovers from hysteria.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - EVENING

Hazel is quietly working while Jules bustles around.

JULES
Where is Cynthia? We must have dinner soon.

HAZEL
Mother, she's gone. She quit.

JULES

Then you must prepare it.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Hazel struggles with cooking while Jules hovers.

JULES

I would like lobster bolognese.

HAZEL

I do not know how to make that.

JULES

Penne alla vodka is acceptable.

HAZEL

I cannot make that either.

JULES

Fine. I will do it myself. Leave.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Hazel stalks Alder.

ALDER

No Skye today?

HAZEL

Skye is cruel now.

ALDER

Fast turnaround.

HAZEL

No one wants to be friends with me.

ALDER

Have you read Bargaboa the Third?

HAZEL

I read a beautiful essay on it.

ALDER

You should read it. Bargaboa had to find who they were and stay true to it despite social pressure to conform.

HAZEL
I need to leave.

ALDER
My analysis is ten years old, but my advice can't be that bad.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF LIBRARY - DAY

Hazel runs out, panting.

HAZEL
Laurel wrote that essay.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Hazel cleans, badly.

JULES
(from the other room)
Keep cleaning.

HAZEL
What have I become?

MIND-LAUREL
Request Cynthia's wages if you are performing her work.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Hazel and Jules eat dinner.

HAZEL
What is this?

JULES
Lasagna, clearly.

HAZEL
This does not look or taste like lasagna.

JULES

Be quiet and eat your share.

HAZEL

I don't want to get sick.

JULES

Sick of me?

HAZEL

No, from the food.

JULES

Excuses, just like the Jackson & Jackson firm.

HAZEL

I'm not an oil lawyer.

JULES

But you no longer want to do business with me. Just like them.

INT. ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Class hasn't started yet, but the students are chatting.

HAZEL

She made me clean. And she fed me inedible pasta. Hey, are you listening to me?

SKYE

How was your night, Fiona?

HAZEL

Hello?

FIONA

Good. I watched television with my family.

LILLIAN

Maybe we should take this conversation to the other side of the classroom.

FIONA

Away from unwelcome ears.

HAZEL
Why are you like this.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel pokes around the kitchen.

JULES
Dinner will be lobster bisque.

HAZEL
You can cook lobster bisque?

JULES
You will.

HAZEL
I don't know how to cook. And we don't
have any of the ingredients.

JULES
You know how to cook. I taught you.

HAZEL
I think I would remember learning how
to cook.

JULES
You stood on this stool.

HAZEL
That stool has been broken since before
I was born.

JULES
Just make it.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Hazel shops around.

HAZEL
Excuse me, what ingredients do I need
for lobster bisque?

WORKER
Lobster, sherry, and heavy cream.

HAZEL
I have three dollars.

WORKER
Get out.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF STORE - NIGHT

HAZEL
What now?

INT. ACADEMY LIBRARY - DAY

Hazel and Alder walks through the halls as he cleans.

HAZEL
And then they told me to leave!

ALDER
Have you ever been in a grocery store
before?

HAZEL
Not that I remember.

ALDER
I'm sensing a new article idea for our
reporter friend.

HAZEL
You should come over.

ALDER
Come over?

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel and Alder walk up to the house.

ALDER
You live on this street? I can't go in.
I can't be here.

HAZEL
Come in, Laurel.

ALDER

Don't call me that. You can't call me that.

HAZEL

It's your name.

ALDER

Not anymore.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Alder follows Hazel in anyway.

HAZEL

Mother! Laurel is here! The real Laurel, not me!

JULES

You are...?

HAZEL

See me for who I really am.

JULES

[name of husband]? This is not your home.

ALDER

I know.

Alder steps in. Jules looks at him funny.

JULES

You have his eyes. Laurel. You're not Laurel anymore, are you?

ALDER

No. I'm Alder.

The clarity evaporates.

JULES

I would never name you such an impure, ugly name. Get out get out get out get out get out get out!

ALDER

I left for a reason.

He slams the door. It startles Jules, and she loses her footing, teetering on the edge of the stairs.

JULES

Hazel.

HAZEL

You know me.

JULES

You are my family.

HAZEL

Yes.

JULES

You are my only family. My only family left. You are all I have.

HAZEL

...

JULES

My only family. Do you understand.

HAZEL

Of course, Mother. I am your only family, forever and ever.

Jules falls down the stairs and dies.

HAZEL

Mother! Are you okay?

Jules does not respond. Hazel hesitates.

HAZEL

I should talk to Alder. Right? Right. Make us a family again.

She opens the door and steps halfway out.

HAZEL

It's for the best. For me.

Hazel leaves, but the camera lingers on Jules' still form in the dark for a couple of seconds.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ACADEMY - DAY

Fiona and Lillian chat before school starts.

FIONA

Ryan learned two new chords on the piano at his last lesson.

LILLIAN

Your little brother has such a musical talent.

FIONA

I wish I had the same.

LILLIAN

Your organization outdoes any frivolous musical skill.

FIONA

You can play the harp.

LILLIAN

Look, Skye approaches.

FIONA

Did you receive my invitation?

SKYE

You host parties often.

FIONA

Not too often. You simply haven't attended many.

SKYE

Right.

LILLIAN

No matter. We will make up for lost time, starting this weekend.

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

Students arrive, without Hazel.

TEACHER

Pair up and review your reports.

Students pair up, leaving Skye alone.

LILLIAN
Where's your shadow?

FIONA
No sidekick today?

SKYE
I didn't hear anything from her.

TEACHER
Is Hazel perhaps sick today?

SKYE
I don't know.
(beat)
Shouldn't you?

TEACHER
Jules did not contact me.

FIONA
Skye can join our group.

SKYE
Thanks. I'm happy I have you two.

LILLIAN
Anytime, girl.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

After school, students file towards cars.

LILLIAN
See you tomorrow.

SKYE
Ugh, I guess I have to walk again.

FIONA
I bet Hazel is off gallivanting in
Chicago or something.

SKYE
Yeah. Probably.

LILLIAN
My mom can give you a ride.

SKYE
Thanks.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Lillian's mom's car drives down the road. Skye waves in front of her house. She turns and looks at Hazel's house.

SKYE
Maybe I'll knock. Just to be sure.

SKYE'S MOTHER
(from inside the house)
Is that you, darling? I have a project for you.

SKYE
She's probably not even home.
(yelling inside)
Coming, Mother!

INT. MURRAY HOUSE STAIRWELL - DAY

Jules lies motionless in the position she fell in. Hazel sits beside her, holding her hand and chattering peacefully.

HAZEL
(fade in, as if she'd been talking for a while)
...but Skye went to Lillian's mother for editing advice, even though yours is clearly superior. It is as if she is suddenly allergic to me, and to this house, and everything inside of it. I wish she would come back. I wish Alder would come back. You treated him badly. You should apologize.

She squeezes Jules' clearly limp hand.

HAZEL
At least you are still here. Everyone else left me, but you are still here.

She lays down, so she and Jules both lie on their backs parallel to each other. Her eyes track patterns on the elaborate ceiling.

HAZEL

I had my doubts. But you stuck with me.
Thank you, Mother.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Lillian's mother parks her car in front of Skye's house.

LILLIAN

I can't wait to meet your family. If
they're anything like you, they must be
lovely.

SKYE

I'll meet you inside. I need to check
on something.

Skye presses her ear against Hazel's door.

HAZEL

(from inside)

Alder is a good friend to me. Better
than any other.
I'll invite him to the coffee shop this
week. Well, I suppose he works there.

Skye rips herself away from the door and runs back.

SKYE'S MOTHER

Everything okay?

SKYE

Nothing we need to worry about.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Alder closes up behind the shop and bumps straight into
Alexandria, who is waiting for him with a pen and paper.

ALDER

Jesus. Don't you know how to leave a
guy alone?

ALEXANDRIA

I would be a poor reporter if I did,
sir. Care to comment on my Jules Murray
hysteria exposure?

ALDER
Oh, she's hysterical, all right.

ALEXANDRIA
You don't say. Elaborate.

// I want to make her seem surprised but I can't think of
anything right now

ALDER
Hysterical or not, she's a terrible
person. That's why I left. That's why I
won't go back.

ALEXANDRIA
You know her personally?

ALDER
(beat)
Redact my name.

ALEXANDRIA
Tell me your story and it's a deal.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel writes a letter, kicking her feet.

HAZEL
(reading aloud)
Dear Great-Aunt Mildred, everything is
fine. Mother will write to you soon.
She is certainly alive and well, and
not at all hysteric. Love, Hazel.

MIND-LAUREL
You sound hysteric.

HAZEL
You sound not real. I know who you are.
You are no help.
(beat; she waits for Mind-
Laurel to respond)
No response?

Mind-Laurel is gone, as she is inside of Hazel's brain.

HAZEL

You and Mother both make for terrible conversationalists.

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

The students cluster into groups.

FIONA

You're all coming to my party this weekend, right?

EDEN

It'll be an improvement from last time for sure. No offense.

LILLIAN

Who's tapping on the glass? It's incredibly annoying.

Skye opens the window. Alexandria is outside, and gestures wildly to her.

EDEN

Shut her up, please.

FIONA

Be nice. We'll sneak you out.

Lillian jumps out of her seat and runs over to the teacher.

LILLIAN

Hi, I have an important question. I need your immediate attention.

She writes a complicated but meaningless equation on the blackboard, prompting the teacher to turn towards her and away from the windows.

FIONA

Ready? On three.

SKYE

What?

EDEN

Wait, what?

Fiona and Eden lift Skye's legs and propel her out of the window. The other students stare.

CALE

The craziness spreads.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ACADEMY - DAY

Fiona and Eden drop Skye in the bushes. She glances back. They wave and shut the window.

ALEXANDRIA

Great friends you have there.

SKYE

They're usually more reasonable.

ALEXANDRIA

I'm not joking. I'd do the same thing any day.

SKYE

What do you want? Hazel's gone.

ALEXANDRIA

Exactly. No one has seen her.

SKYE

I went by her house. She was fine.

ALEXANDRIA

Did you see her?

SKYE

Well.

CUT TO: SHOT OF SKYE OUTSIDE OF HAZEL'S HOUSE, LISTENING

CUT TO: RETURN TO SKYE AND ALEXANDRIA'S CONVERSATION

SKYE

No.

Overlaid in quick succession are quick shots of all of Alexandria's interviewees: Alder, Skye, Skye's parents, Eden, Lillian, Fiona, Fiona's parents, the teacher, Alder's boss.

I haven't seen her since Thursday.

INT. MILDRED'S PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

MILDRED, the Murrays' only surviving relative, a stately and firm old woman, reviews documents at a desk. An AIDE lays a copy of Alexandria's latest article in front of her.

AIDE

The article you requested, ma'am.

MILDRED

Dismissed.

She ponders the article, grumbling.

MILDRED

Prep a memorandum at once.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Hazel arrives with the letter. Cale works behind the desk. Hazel tries to duck into one of the booths.

CALE

I see you. No use hiding.

Hazel hesitates, then emerges.

HAZEL

What are you doing back there?

CALE

I work here. Not all of us can afford Academy tuitions from our trust funds.

HAZEL

My family works hard for our pay.

CALE

Get me into oil too.

Hazel drops the letter on the desk.

HAZEL

Just send this. Now.

CALE

Needy. That will be fifty cents.

HAZEL

That's outrageously expensive!

CALE

I know you can pay it.

HAZEL

You're nothing but a swindler and a cheat. The only reason anyone talks to you is because they pity you.

CALE

What happened to you? You've become a ghost.

HAZEL

No ghosts here.

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

Hazel reappears, causing a stir.

LILLIAN

You're back! What happened?

HAZEL

I don't speak to you.

Hazel brushes by them, knocking Eden's shoulder in the process. She sits by herself in the corner.

FIONA

Skye, you should talk to her.

SKYE

No way. We're not friends.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ACADEMY - DAY

The students leave.

LILLIAN

Am I dropping you off again?

SKYE

You can come in.

Fiona grabs Hazel's shoulder and pulls her around a corner.

FIONA

I'm having another party on Friday. You should come.

HAZEL

You can't be serious.

FIONA

I am. I want to make amends.

HAZEL

Your house is ugly and you're mean. I would never go.

Fiona pulls back.

EDEN

(yelling from the other end
of the lot)

Fiona, come on.

FIONA

Suit yourself. The invitation is yours if you change your mind.

HAZEL

I won't.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel paces around Jules' body.

HAZEL

I changed my mind. I should go, shouldn't I, Mother? You always have such ideas about decorum. Making an appearance, you called it. Would it not be a good idea to make an appearance? Not because I actually care. Just to show that I can. To bolster the Murray family name.

(beat)

Whatever that means.

(beat)
You need to shower, Mother. You are starting to smell. You would never let me fall into disarray. I will have to carry the family name by myself.

INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY

The students work in groups on economic projects, except for Hazel, who works alone. She leans over to Skye, who's working with Lillian, Eden, and Fiona, as per usual.

HAZEL
Get any better at economics yet?

SKYE
Why do you care?

HAZEL
I saw your parents' automobile leave two days ago.

SKYE
Why are you watching my parents?

HAZEL
It has yet to return. They left you behind again, didn't they?

SKYE
I told you that in confidence.

EDEN
Told her what?

FIONA
Don't worry about it. Leave her alone, Hazel.

LILLIAN
Skye's staying with my family.

HAZEL
It's a shame they don't love you.

SKYE
Is your mother better?

HAZEL

We spend every afternoon together.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Alexandria types up her notes at a typewriter. Eden knocks.

EDEN

I have an update to your Hazel Murray story. She's a jerk.

ALEXANDRIA

We all know this, kid.

EDEN

I want to go public. She was mean to my friend.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - DAY

Hazel reads a letter.

HAZEL

Mother, I have an update! Great-Aunt Mildred sends her regards, and a friend to evaluate your condition. They are coming on Saturday. Quite soon.

She pokes Jules in the cheek.

HAZEL

Oops, you would never have let me get away with that in the past! You are getting soft. If you want to withstand Great-Aunt Mildred, you will have to improve your responsiveness.

She lies down next to Jules.

HAZEL

They can't separate us. We've been together forever. Two peas in a pod, you and I.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Alder works the register. Hazel walks up like she's going to order something.

ALDER
What can I get you?

HAZEL
Some information would be nice.

ALDER
Alexandria already pulled that line on me.

HAZEL
So I am nothing. I see.

ALDER
You knew all along, and you kept it a secret. You exposed me to the person I hate the most.

HAZEL
You knew too. You cannot pretend to be all high-and-mighty.

ALDER
I was trying to figure out a mature way to tell you without risking you blowing up.

HAZEL
You're the worst sibling.

ALDER
Like you have much material to compare me to.

HAZEL
Mind-Laurel was much better.

ALDER
Mind-Laurel can stay. I never want to speak to you again. You and Mother are two peas in a pod.

INT. MILDRED'S PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Mildred sits at the desk, same as in her previous scene.

AIDE

Your three o'clock is here.

MILDRED

Send her in.

The aide opens the door to reveal Alexandria.

ALEXANDRIA

Thank you for reaching out. I am beyond honored.

MILDRED

Put your notebook away. Only I ask the questions here.

ALEXANDRIA

I am a reporter. I can't in good conscience not report.

MILDRED

Then you are free to leave.

ALEXANDRIA

Fine. As you wish.

Alexandria tucks the notebook and pen into her back, but out of sight of Mildred, turns on a tape recorder.

ALEXANDRIA

I don't understand how you expect me to write an article without notes, quotes, and thoughts.

MILDRED

You will not be writing an article.

Mildred slides Alexandria's second article across the desk.

MILDRED

Tell me more about Hazel Murray throwing a tantrum at a party.

ALEXANDRIA

You paid for my train ticket so I could tattle on your granddaughter.

MILDRED

Great-niece. Continue.

ALEXANDRIA

Fine. I had a story brewing. I went to the party for reconnaissance.

MILDRED

To a schoolgirl's party.

ALEXANDRIA

Anything for the story.

MILDRED

I would have done the same.

ALEXANDRIA

Wow. Well, Hazel Murray was kicked out and got into a fight with her friend outside.

MILDRED

In public?

ALEXANDRIA

Party guests watched.

MILDRED

Where was her mother?

ALEXANDRIA

Nobody knows. Jules has not been seen in weeks.

MILDRED

I received a very angry phone call from a business associate when Jules skipped many meetings.

ALEXANDRIA

What will happen to the company?

MILDRED

It may be lost. Let Jules deal with the fallout. I have my own fortune.

ALEXANDRIA

As in, the company went bankrupt?

MILDRED

I cannot allow this to continue. The damage to the family name is insurmountable.

(yelling to the aide)
Prep my bags. We must travel to corral my wayward nieces.

AIDE
Already packed, ma'am.

MILDRED
What disgraces to the Murray name they are. No longer.
(to Alexandria)
Your services are no longer needed.

ALEXANDRIA
I wish I could say the same, but I have many more questions.

INT.

HAZEL
She doesn't have hysteria.

ALEXANDRIA
Be reasonable.

HAZEL
Not anymore.

INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hazel enters. Mimic camera and blocking from the first party scene. She knocks.

FIONA'S FATHER
Hazel Murray. Welcome.

HAZEL
I am welcome?

FIONA'S FATHER
Absolutely. Fiona kept me in the loop this time.

INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Hazel and Fiona's father enter calmly and slowly, together. The house is packed with students, including Cale, Eden, Lillian, and Skye.

FIONA'S FATHER

Fiona would like to speak with you.

Hazel floats through the party, searching for Fiona. As she passes through, her classmates speak.

CALE

What is she doing here?

UNNAMED CLASSMATE 2

I can't believe she was invited back.

UNNAMED CLASSMATE 3

Fiona invited her.

UNNAMED CLASSMATE 4

She went missing for days.

Hazel walks up to a group of girls from her class. They're all dressed much more causally than her.

UNNAMED FEMALE CLASSMATE

Her great-aunt is scary. Anyone who crosses that journalist isn't someone I want to mess with.

HAZEL

When did Mildred come into play?

The group disperses, leaving Hazel alone.

She repeats the process with a couple other pods. All end the same way.

Hazel spots Fiona and starts beelining for her. However, Cale gets in her way.

CALE

Have you seen the newest article?

He shoves a paper at her, but Fiona finds her first.

FIONA

Can I speak to you for a second?

INT. FIONA'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Fiona's parents wait for them in the dining room.

FIONA

You may have guessed I didn't invite
you because we're friends.

HAZEL

You didn't?

FIONA'S FATHER

You have had a hard time recently,
haven't you?

FIONA'S MOTHER

I know your mother is sick. Hysterics,
forgetfulness.

HAZEL

Mother is fine. She is in perfect
health. She can function as normal.

FIONA

Think about yourself. You shouldn't
live in an unhealthy environment.

HAZEL

My living environment is perfectly
healthy. I can do everything.

FIONA

You shouldn't have to.

Skye bursts in, with clamoring from the students outside.

SKYE

You should see this.

HAZEL

I do not care about a stupid article.
It is meaningless.

SKYE

Jules stood up a businessman and lost
the company.

HAZEL

She had no meetings. I saw nothing on her calendar.

SKYE

She didn't tell you everything.

HAZEL

I need to go home. Leave me alone.

FIONA

We just want to help you.

HAZEL

Where was your help when I wanted to be your friend? Am I still too weird for you?

SKYE

You were a bad friend.

HAZEL

Mother is the only one who understands me. You can't take her away. I cannot lose her.

EXT. FIONA'S FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Hazel runs out crying. Her classmates and Fiona's family follow her out. Alexandria waits for comment.

ALEXANDRIA

Ms. Murray, care to comment on the loss of your family company?

HAZEL

That's not true. It's not real.

ALEXANDRIA

I'm sorry, it is. I spoke with the vice chair yesterday.

HAZEL

I can work. I can take it back.

ALEXANDRIA

You are fifteen. You cannot work.

HAZEL

I need to stay with Mother. I can pay
for the house.

ALEXANDRIA

You can't.

Mildred's vehicle pulls up.

MILDRED

What disgrace. I let this situation
spiral out of hand.

HAZEL

Great-Aunt Mildred. You will fix
everything, right?

MILDRED

Of course I will. Jules and I need to
speak.

HAZEL

She cannot speak with you.

MILDRED

She will speak with me whether she
wants me to or not.

Sirens sound down the road.

HAZEL

No. No. No, they can't take her.

SKYE

What are you talking about?

LILLIAN

She sounds as crazy as her mother.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - NIGHT

Hazel sprints the whole way home. Vehicles pull up after her,
from Mildred and Fiona's family.

HAZEL

They can't take her.

ALEXANDRIA

(writing)
Calls... her house... a her.

MILDRED
What is that dreadful smell?

SKYE
Hazel... What happened?

HAZEL
Nothing. Everything is fine.

MILDRED
Let me in.

HAZEL
It's not your home. You don't know me.
You've been absent from my entire life-
No, stop that!

Fiona, Lillian, Eden, and Skye sneak around Hazel and kick the door down.

SKYE
Sorry. It has to be done.

HAZEL
Is there any way left you can betray me?

MILDRED
What on Earth is this?

With the door open, Jules' body is on full display, suddenly much more grotesque than it had seemed before.

HAZEL
She's fine! You can't take her away!
You can't take me away!

MILDRED
How could you let this happen.

The commotion causes Skye's parents to leave their house.

SKYE'S MOTHER
I always knew there was something wrong with that family.

SKYE'S FATHER

Stay away from our daughter.

SKYE

This is a new low, Hazel.

FIONA

I tried to help you. All this time, you lied to me.

LILLIAN

I knew you were always too weird.

MILDRED

You have ruined this family and dragged its name through the mud.

HAZEL

I kept the house going. I kept the family going. I kept Mother going.

EDEN

Clearly not; look at her.

Mildred turns away.

MILDRED

Never call yourself a Murray. I expect you gone by the time I turn.

Instead, Hazel darts into the house and slams the door shut.

MILDRED

(from outside)

Open the door this instant!

SKYE'S MOTHER

We have a telephone. We can call the police.

Hazel curls up next to Jules and grips her hand.

HAZEL

I promise I was competent. I ran your company.

Jules' dead silence is unforgiving.

HAZEL

You let me down.
 (beat)
I let you down.

Sirens wail from far away.

 HAZEL
They're going to take you away. I'll
never see you again.

She lies there in silence for a while, crying.

 HAZEL
But you have been gone for a while.

She stands up. Her pose is perpendicular to Jules' for the first time since she died.

 HAZEL
You treated me so badly. You robbed me
of the skills to succeed. You made me
second-guess myself.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel gathers her things.

 HAZEL
Laurel's journal. Alder's. I want to
keep it, but I shouldn't. He can tell
me his stories himself.

She grabs a folder of papers.

 HAZEL
Skye may want our letters back.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MURRAY HOUSE - SUNRISE

The kids have gone home, but Mildred and Alexandria are still present, talking to police. Hazel opens the door.

 HAZEL
Do what you must.

 MILDRED
Where are you going?

HAZEL

I have some errands to run.

She hands Alexandria a folder of papers.

HAZEL

Family history documents. I requested these from the libraries for my school project.

ALEXANDRIA

So you were the reason I could never find anything.

HAZEL

My project seems akin to small potatoes compared to yours.

ALEXANDRIA

If it made you happy, it's important.

She ruffles Hazel's hair.

HAZEL

Can you give me a ride?

ALEXANDRIA

So you have ulterior motives. Sure.

HAZEL

I have one stop to make first.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF SKYE'S HOUSE - DAY

Hazel throws rocks at Skye's window.

SKYE

What do you want?

HAZEL

You've got mail.

She waves the letters at Skye, who disappears. A minute later, Skye slips out the back door.

SKYE

Don't let my parents see.

HAZEL

I know you probably don't want to hear from me.

SKYE

Not really.

HAZEL

I wrote you a letter. Read it when you feel ready.

SKYE

Okay. I don't know how long it will take me.

HAZEL

I don't mind. I might not see you again, though.

SKYE

I'll write back. Someday.

EXT. FIONA'S FRONT LAWN - DAY

Alexandria waits in the car. Hazel knocks.

FIONA

Are you okay?

HAZEL

Not really.

Hazel hands Fiona fancy food from her pantry.

HAZEL

For your next party. Thank you for inviting me.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Hazel weaves through the library.

HAZEL

I can't find him. It's useless.

ALEXANDRIA

No area of inquiry is ever useless.

HAZEL

I will show you where I researched my family.

When they arrive at that stack, Alder is already there, although he starts to leave.

ALEXANDRIA

See, perfect.

HAZEL

Don't go where I can't follow.

ALDER

Follow, then.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF LIBRARY - DAY

Alder lets them out the back entrance.

HAZEL

This is yours. I apologize for keeping it for so long.

She hands him the journal.

ALDER

I forgot all about this.

HAZEL

Don't get into the business of forgetting. Mother did. It's nasty.

ALDER

I wish I could forget.

HAZEL

No, you don't.

(beat)

She's gone.

ALDER

Mother?

HAZEL

Yes. For a couple of days now.

ALDER

Why did you keep it a secret?

HAZEL

I didn't want anything to change.

Alder flips to the next open page in the journal and dates a new entry. He hands the pen to Hazel.

ALDER

We all need change.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Jules is carried out in a casket. Mildred directs the workers, barking orders. Hazel sits on the lawn, watching it all. Alder sits down beside her. Skye watches.

HAZEL

Congratulations. She's gone.

ALDER

Don't think about how I feel. It will only make you upset.

HAZEL

She was nicer as a corpse. Weird.

ALDER

Let me guess. She listened to you as a corpse.

HAZEL

She couldn't yell at me or order me around, or contradict herself.

ALDER

Strangely peaceful.

They watch the casket leave down the road.

ALDER

Farewell.

The job is done. Mildred stalks over to them.

MILDRED

Tell me you are packed. Your train leaves tomorrow morning.

HAZEL

I don't think there is anything I want to bring.

ALDER

Where are you going?

MILDRED

The Chicago Preparatory Academy for Girls gracefully extended Hazel an invitation to study.

(beat)

With a large donation, of course.

ALDER

Is that what you want?

HAZEL

I need to try.

MILDRED

I leave tonight. Please write if any problems arise. Good day.

HAZEL

Did she do anything for you?

ALDER

No. Well, the library received an anonymous donation.

HAZEL

She's not meddling in your life.

ALDER

It's kinder. I don't want the family to acknowledge me.

HAZEL

You won't go to the funeral.

ALDER

To me, she died a long time ago.

HAZEL

In a way, me too.

ALDER

You might benefit from meeting some family.

HAZEL

They don't actually care about me. They care about the family name.

ALDER

Mildred found a home for you.

HAZEL

She is only worried about the potential backlash.

ALDER

Maybe. I trust Alexandria to make sure you're set up right.

HAZEL

Can you do me a favor?

ALDER

Last time I did you a favor, it ended in death and carnage.

HAZEL

I called Cynthia, Mother's old maid. Fiona let me use her phone. She may come by the house.

ALDER

Thoughtful of you.

HAZEL

She may have belongings here. Or items she wants to keep. I don't care, and neither do you.

ALDER

No problem. Travel safe.

He gives her an awkward hug.

HAZEL

Thanks. Good luck in life, I guess.

ALDER

If boarding school is terrible, send me a letter. Or call me.

HAZEL

You have a phone?

ALDER

The library does. I may move, though.
This town is too small for me now.

HAZEL

Send me your new address if you do.

INT. BOARDING SCHOOL DORM - DAY

Hazel settles down at her desk with a piece of paper. Her ROOMMATE, a girl of a similar age, puts on makeup.

ROOMMATE

Homework again? You're so studious.

HAZEL

Not today. I have a couple of letters
to write.

ROOMMATE

I can sneak you into the phone room, if
you want.

HAZEL

I'm good.

(she second-guesses herself)

Maybe another time. Thank you.

ROOMMATE

You're welcome. Who's the lucky
recipient?

HAZEL

My brother. And maybe my friend.

ROOMMATE

Sounds like a lot of work. Good luck.
Are you coming to the party?

HAZEL

After I finish these.

ROOMMATE

Good. You're fun to party with.

HAZEL

That is a first.

As the roommate leaves, she starts penning the letters.

HAZEL

Maybe partying is not for me. Fiona
would know. I'll send her a letter.

// NAHHH

INT. ALDER'S NEW APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alder reads peacefully inside, lit by candles. Hazel knocks on
his window. He grabs a bat.

HAZEL

Put that down. Do you mean to kill me
when I've just arrived?

ALDER

Your break is not for another two
weeks. How are you here?

HAZEL

I snuck out. I got bored.

ALDER

I thought you planned to visit our
hometown during the holiday.

HAZEL

I will.

ALDER

Okay. Come in.

He opens the window and Hazel crawls inside.

ALDER

You're a little crazy.

HAZEL

After everything, I would be worried if
I was normal.

ALDER

Normal is overrated. Are you happy?

HAZEL

Now I am.