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## Unmoored: Exploring Identity and Change

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# UNMOORED: EXPLORING IDENTITY AND CHANGE

by

MICHELLE BONDZIE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Film  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
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Thesis Chair: Lisa Mills, Ph.D.

## Abstract

Many of the shifts in our identity are as surprising as they are inevitable. As with our bodies and our minds, it's easy to forget that our identities are in a constant state of change — that is, until a situation forces us to face ourselves and examine who we've become. For adolescents, college students included, reckonings with their sense of self come frequently; they feel seismic each time they occur.

My thesis will be a short screenplay in which the central character is recovering from severe executive dysfunction, the impairment of basic skills that include working memory, mental flexibility, and inhibitory control. She will confront the question at the heart of the Ship of Theseus: have I changed enough that I am now an entirely different person than I used to be? And if so, what now?

As part of the story development process, I viewed films that told compelling stories about the impact physical changes can have on one's identity. I intend for my screenplay to explore the ability of a change in mental health to do the same.

## Dedication

“Sometimes you don’t survive whole. You just survive in parts. But the grandeur of life is that attempt.” — Toni Morrison

## Acknowledgements

To Dr. Mills and Dr. Cash, for your insightful ideas and endless patience.

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## Introduction: The Ship of Theseus

### Explanation of the Question

The Ship of Theseus is a thought experiment first codified by Plutarch. After the hero Theseus returned to Greece, his ship was preserved. Over time, the planks of the ship began to rot; they were replaced one-by-one until none of the original planks remained. Now that the ship is constructed out of entirely new parts, is it still the same ship? If not, at what point did it become something new entirely?

### Applications

Lance Hosey's "The Ship of Theseus: Identity and the Barcelona Pavilion(s)" examines this concept through the 1986 reconstruction of the Barcelona Pavilion, a building which had originally been built in 1929 and demolished in 1930. As he explores the question of the building's identity, Hosey puts forth Aristotle's four fundamental 'causes' of any object as a guide to determining if the rebuilt pavilion can be considered the same building as the original. These causes are: form, which includes all the dimensional and spatial aspects of an object (such as size and shape), matter, what the object consists of, origin, how the object came to be, and purpose, its reason for being. Aristotle considered form to be an 'essential' quality that cannot vary without affecting an object's identity and matter is an 'accidental' quality that can; he would've determined the Ship of Theseus to be the same ship at each point of its change. As Hosey notes, "unless an arbitrary restriction is made on the number of parts that may be

exchanged, theoretically the entire structure may change materially without losing its essence” (232).

The role of social actors in defining one’s identity is explored in “The Band of Theseus: Social Individuals and Mental Files” by Enrico Terrone. He proposed that, for every social individual (either an individual person or a group) a ‘mental file’ containing information about them exists. These files are held privately by every person in a community and contain descriptive information about the individual; they are also held publicly by the entire community, and focus on information one should know if they want to “count as a well-informed member of [their] community” (Terrone 291). As the existence of every social individual is grounded in these files, any changes to their identity are determined by the manner in which their particular file is “updated,” if at all.

As I considered how to incorporate the Ship of Theseus into my story, I used Terrone’s outline of the social construction of identity and Hosey’s references to Aristotle as guidelines to what is fundamental when evaluating a change in identity, and what is not.



## Identity and Mental Illness

### Impact

In a 2008 analysis of 45 first- and third-person accounts of experiences with severe mental illness — including mood disorders such as bipolar disorder and depression, schizophrenia spectrum disorders, and others like borderline personality disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder — a number of methods used to process the unwanted change in identity were noted. They included the point of view that the “onset of mental illness... [had taken] away a person’s sense of self... result[ing] in the loss of their previously held identity” (Wisdom et al. 491). Another was the assertion of “their mentally ill self as only a ‘fragment’ of who they really are” as they attempted to “reconcile [that] part of themselves... with the rest of their roles and identities” (Wisdom et al. 492). A similar reaction has been observed among adolescents. As noted by Kerri Lynn Blackstone, “people who are diagnosed as young adults report a greater struggle to develop a cohesive adult identity within the context of having a mental illness, often expressing the need to “find or adapt to their real self” following diagnosis” (27).

### Recovery

In the same way that recovery for a person with a chronic illness will look different than recovery for a person with a broken arm, defining recovery from severe mental illness as a permanent solution to the problem or reversal to the individual’s previous state is unrealistic. Carless and Douglass remarked that “a common theme in

diverse conceptions of recovery... revolve[s] around the rebuilding or recreation of a sense of self, an identity, and a sense of purpose within meaningful social roles and relationships.” In their endeavor to develop a non-clinical conception of recovery, Davidson et al. center their definition on hope — “particularly about one’s ability to rebuild a positive sense of self and social identity despite remaining ill” (484-485).

## Executive Dysfunction

The processes that enable us to “control and coordinate our thoughts and behavior” (Blakemore and Choudhury 301) are our Executive Functions. Described as the “air traffic control center of the brain” by the Center of the Developing Child, they “allow relevant information to enter, block entrance of intrusive material, and discard information that is no longer relevant” (Warren 209). These systems begin to develop in childhood and continue to do so through adolescence. They direct a number of our foundational skills, including our organizational, time management, problem solving, impulse control, and emotional self-regulation abilities, as well as our attention, working memory, and mental flexibility. The inhibition of some or all of these skills is often referred to as Executive Dysfunction. It can occur in those who have ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, depression, anxiety, chronic stress and OCD, as well as in those who have suffered a brain injury; it is an underdiscussed aspect of these conditions. One analysis found that “the cognitive difficulties in attention and memory that are associated with depression and anxiety (e.g. difficulty concentrating and indecisiveness) are [likely] driven in part by EF deficits” (Warren 208). Executive functioning deficits have been found to be both a precursor to and a result of the onset of a mental disorder in adolescents (Romer and Pizzagalli 9).

For college students, tasked with balancing their academic obligations, social life, personal well-being, and impending career, their worlds are already a little messy; for those with impaired executive function, things can easily spiral into chaos. In their lives, executive dysfunction is most noticeable as chronic procrastination. Rather than making

the conscious choice to put something off, these students try to complete the task but are unable to, resulting in “anxiety, irritation, regret, despair, or self-blame” (Rabin et al. 344). Their struggles to accomplish their goals can lead to reduced academic achievement and quality of life and new health problems; low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy can also be reinforced. These issues can bleed into everyday life, making it difficult to complete simple tasks and meet their basic needs, and directly damaging their sense of self-confidence and self-competence.

## Creative Process

### Story Development

My research for this thesis began with my interest in applying the Ship of Theseus to the question of a person's identity. This led me to two films that referenced the topic directly and indirectly: *Ship of Theseus* (2012), directed by Anand Ghandi, and *Sound of Metal* (2019), directed by Darius Marder. *Sound of Metal* tells the story of a drummer who loses his hearing and spends months in denial, believing that the loss is temporary. The film ends as he makes peace with the permanence of his deafness, fully accepting his new identity as a member of the non-hearing world. *Ship of Theseus* tells the story of three people who each receive a transplant from the same donor and the impact it has on their respective identities. The first follows a blind photographer whose eye transplant restores her sight; feeling that she's lost what made her work special — her reliance on her intuition — she begins to wear a blindfold over her eyes to return to her old methods of working. In the second, a monk finds out that he needs a liver transplant, however, getting one would go against his moral principles. He remains steadfast in his decision not to get one, until he changes his mind as he's on death's doorstep. The last story is about a stock broker who initially believes his transplanted kidney to have been stolen from a bricklayer. Once he finds out that it was not, he wants to find the recipient of the stolen kidney so it can be returned to the bricklayer. The bricklayer, however, would prefer to be made whole monetarily. These compelling

stories about the impact physical changes can have on one's identity inspired my intention to explore the role of a change in mental health to do the same.

To guide the story development process, I read through the first seven chapters of Claudia Hunter Johnson's *Crafting Short Screenplays That Connect*. Above all, Johnson emphasizes that conflict and connection are at the heart of every story. Each chapter introduced an idea that helped to shape the direction my story was taking. Chapter 1 defined the screenwriter's purpose: telling a story that creates empathy in your audience. Chapter 2 introduced Le Menu, an exercise that encouraged me to think about the things I know well and feel most strongly about; those items were the starting points I used as I began to develop my voice as a writer. Chapter 3 discussed genre conventions, Chapter 4 stressed the importance of figuring out your writing process and how you work best, and Chapter 5 detailed the benefits (and drawbacks) to writing with a partner. Chapter 6 described the spine of a screenplay as a "simple but meaningful pattern of human change" (54) — Johnson quotes Patrick Duncan as saying, "let the story be simple and let the characters be complicated" (54) — and Chapter 7 discussed some guidelines for developing dimensional characters. In addition to the exercises in the book, completing plot flowcharts helped me to envision the different paths my story could take and determine which ones were the most meaningful. Further development began with the completion of a STEP outline, which detailed each scene in the story, before I started to formally write the screenplay. The premise I chose to center my story on was *self-honesty leads to growth*.

## Writing the Screenplay

At the end of the Directed Readings Semester, I had the following story synopsis:

After experiencing her most stressful semester yet, my character returns to her hometown for the summer. Her hopes for a relaxing break are quickly shattered once she realizes that the executive functioning issues that plagued her school year have followed her home. As the summer comes to a close and she hasn't yet been able to "fix" herself, her fears that the upcoming semester will bring another mental collapse begin to grow. With a few weeks left before returning to campus, she begins to help her parents digitize their boxes of family photos and videos. This gives her a chance to watch herself grow up, and unearths memories, both good and bad.

In an attempt to bring some consistency to her aimless summer days, my character decides to start keeping a dream journal. Just a few days after beginning to work on the videos, a pattern becomes apparent. Her mind is returning to "failures" from her childhood: not being prepared for a competition, a messed-up melody from an audition. Although these moments that seemed harmless before, the more she thinks about them, they seem to be at the root of all of her current problems; what she sees in her dreams might be the true cause of her lack of confidence in herself. Her growing fixation on these events drives her to ask her childhood best friend for her family's home videos, many of which were taken at the same events that they attended as kids. As they catch up, they hatch a plan to help my character remedy her negative memories and repair her relationship with herself.

While this story incorporated the subjects I wanted to explore, it posed a challenge — there wasn't a clear way to visualize the story's central conflict, found in the main character's relationship with herself. After taking a break from the project for a few weeks, I felt that the simplest solution would be to have an additional character embody the main character's inner self. As I brainstormed ways to depict the relationship between a character's inner and outer selves, the story took itself in an entirely different direction and I decided to see where it went. My revised story has the following logline: A worn out college student, recovering from severe executive dysfunction, is forced to confront herself after her attempts to finish an assignment and bake a cake for a friend's birthday party send her world into chaos.

I chose to incorporate executive dysfunction into my screenplay because of its ability to cut to the core of a person's identity. For my main character, June, the damage was inflicted on the parts of herself that she values the most: being a good friend, a good student, and a self-sufficient human being. It is incredibly disorienting to lose control of yourself at such a basic level, and draining to watch executive dysfunction eat into every one of your relationships — including, and especially, your relationship with yourself — despite your best efforts. I decided to center my screenplay around a regular day in my main character's life, where she must constantly fight herself to keep things under control. The tasks that she attempts to balance — finishing her project and making the cake — connect back to the parts of her identity that are most important to her. Unfortunately, with the limited time she has, she can't give her full attention to either task and can't be fully mentally, emotionally, or physically present during the party later on. In her conversation with her friend Spencer near the end of the screenplay, it's clear that June doesn't yet have the words to explain the cause of what she's experiencing, but she can illustrate its effect, as well as her fear that it'll continue to ruin things in perpetuity.

In the screenplay, June struggles with executive dysfunction when she:

- uses sticky notes scattered haphazardly around her room to keep track of deadlines (organization),
- forgets that she can't use blueberries for the cake immediately after being told (working memory),
- chooses to sit on her bed as she looks through the cookbook, despite knowing that she'll probably fall asleep (impulse control),



- can't gauge how much time she's spent comparing recipes (time management),
- and can't focus on troubleshooting the code (attention).

As I began to decide who June would be, I felt it would fit well with the story's themes for her to be an innately analytical, logical person whose thinking — and view of herself — tended to be black and white. In her mind, she's either fixed or she's not; there's no middle ground between the old, better, version of herself and the new, worse, person she feels she is. I chose to have her work on a robot throughout the screenplay for two reasons, the first being to make the time spent on her project more interesting than watching text on a screen be typed and deleted. I wanted to contrast her control over the robot to her embodiment of the way her mind functions: her "inner self," working in a control room to similarly direct her. The fix for the robot is far more simple than the work she envisions Inner June putting in to keep the system running, since, of course, she isn't a robot, she's a human being. Her journey through the screenplay ends in acceptance that there won't be an instant solution to her problem. After completing the screenplay, I came to an alternate premise: *(self-)acceptance leads to growth*.

### Reflection

More than anything, writing this screenplay has taught me not to be afraid of edits and revisions. I was surprised at how often I felt afraid as I progressed through each stage of the project — scared of putting time and effort into something that wasn't 'good' or that I didn't like, scared of finding out that I wasn't capable of pulling off my idea at all. Even though the story synopsis I developed during my Directed Readings semester is entirely different from my final screenplay, I don't feel that the time used

working on that concept was in vain. No time spent developing an idea is wasted; each discarded idea taught me about the most effective way to tell my story and led me to new ideas that made it stronger.

Finding my boundaries as a writer was another significant part of this experience. As much as I'd like to write about subjects that I have personal experience with, I've learned to be cautious about incorporating topics that I don't yet have (healthy) emotional distance from. My own experiences, past and present, with executive dysfunction were a very helpful reference as I developed my main character; unfortunately, I found that my experience was so fresh that I put more pressure on myself to tell the story the "right" way than I would have with any other topic and found myself taking feedback more personally than I would have otherwise.

Now that the screenplay is completed, I feel more confident in myself as a writer. I'm hoping to direct the project later this year; I'm excited to see the story come to life.

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## APPENDIX: UNMOORED

UNMOORED

Written by

Michelle Bondzie

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

OUTER JUNE is on the phone with her friend SPENCER. She stands in her kitchen, looking at the snacks on the shelf.

SPENCER (V.O.)  
I didn't realize your internship  
started so soon... no break, huh?  
When are you flying out?

OUTER JUNE  
Not soon enough. I can't wait until  
all of this is over.

SPENCER (V.O.)  
Speaking of, how's your robot thing  
going? Have you finished him yet?

OUTER JUNE  
I wish. I'm on hour seven of coding  
and I haven't eaten anything since  
I started. I took a break to find a  
snack and I've been standing here  
for...

She looks up at the wall: the clock reads 10:00.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
...oh, twenty minutes. Yikes.

She sticks her hand in a granola bar box - to her surprise,  
it's empty. She shakes it around.

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Spencer stands at the back of her car, pulling her purchases  
out of the trunk.

SPENCER  
(checking the contents of  
each bag)  
...balloons, ballon pump, candles.  
Oh no.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

SPENCER (V.O.)  
We don't have a cake. Is it too  
late to order one?

June looks across the room. Her recipe book is on the  
counter.



OUTER JUNE  
I could make one.

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Spencer closes the trunk and walks away from her car.

SPENCER  
Could you? Right, because you've --

SPENCER (CONT'D)                      OUTER JUNE  
-- done it before?                      I've done it before.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Outer June smiles hesitantly.

OUTER JUNE  
Let me check my planner.

She takes the recipe book and heads towards her bedroom.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June walks into her room. She begins to scan the bright sticky notes marked with 'to do' items that decorate the walls. \*

OUTER JUNE  
...I want to do something nice for her, I feel like I've been such a bad friend lately.

SPENCER (V.O.)  
When's your deadline?

OUTER JUNE  
5:00, I think, but I'm pretty sure I only need an hour to get it done-

She pulls an orange sticky note off of the wall above her desk.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
Yeah. I can finish both before we meet at 4.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

INNER JUNE - nearly identical to her outer self, and yet visibly more put together - gets up from the monitors displaying June's inner code. She walks over to a wall of sticky notes placed in a careful grid - they're the same notes in Outer June's bedroom.

She pulls the orange note off of the wall and looks at it with concern.

INNER JUNE

I can't recommend this. At your current rate, you'll need three hours to finish this project.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

OUTER JUNE

I'll have enough time.

SPENCER (V.O.)

I really appreciated you baking that cake last minute for me last time, but I don't want to add any stress-

OUTER JUNE

You aren't! I can handle both. It'll be fun.

SIMULTANEOUS - SPLIT SCREEN

INNER JUNE/SPENCER

Are you sure?

END SPLIT SCREEN

OUTER JUNE

(convincing herself)

Yes! Is there anything I should remember?

She finds her sticky note cube and writes 'BAKE CAKE!'

SPENCER (V.O.)

Hmm - they didn't have any blue balloons, I got some green ones instead - so maybe a different color for the cake? And she doesn't like that cream filling, you know, and she's allergic to blueberries now.

(MORE)

SPENCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Or she just started hating that  
filling and she's always been  
allergic to blueberries. I forget.

OUTER JUNE  
Noted. See you tomorrow!

SPENCER (V.O.)  
Good night!

Outer June ends the call, adds 'BLUE \*\*' and 'BAVARIAN X' to  
the note, and places it on the wall.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Inner June looks at the new pink note on her wall. She checks  
a set of timers, each counting down to a different time - one  
for meeting at 4PM, one for her 5PM deadline, and so on. The  
further away the time, the slower the clock's hands move. She  
sighs.

INNER JUNE  
Fine. If you start now, you can get  
the cakes out of the oven and do  
your "hour" of code before  
midnight.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June moves some of the empty water bottles on her desk  
to make space for the recipe book. Next to it are her laptop  
and MAX, the robot she's coding for her project. She opens  
the recipe book and begins to scroll through the open program  
on her laptop.

OUTER JUNE  
Would I get everything done faster  
if I mix the batter now? Or should  
I finish this section of code  
first?

INNER JUNE (O.S.)  
You can't do either until you eat  
something.

OUTER JUNE  
That's true.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Outer June pulls a few ingredients - milk, eggs, butter - out of the refrigerator and sets them on the counter. She closes the refrigerator and pauses for a moment. Whatever she meant to do here, she's forgotten. She walks back to her room.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Inner June is straightening up the notes on her wall when notices Outer June on the monitor, back near the bed. She frowns.

INNER JUNE

What- I thought you needed to eat something.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

OUTER JUNE

(with noticeably less energy)

Ah. Oops.

She moves onto her bed with the recipe book, stretching her legs to avoid the pile of clothes at the foot of her bed.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)

I won't fall asleep. I just want to think somewhere more... comfortable.

INNER JUNE (O.S.)

Sure. Pick a recipe and we can start on the batter.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June types in a command and presses the 'Initiate Task' button on her keyboard - it's jammed.

OUTER JUNE (O.S)

(comparing recipes)

One tablespoon of salt... I read that wrong, that's one teaspoon... do I have any confectioner's sugar?

Inner June presses down harder, hoping it'll unstick itself, but it doesn't work. A fog begins to fill the room. Error messages pop up on June's internal code and the system begins to overheat and slow down.

INNER JUNE  
I just fixed this.

Inner June runs into the Server Room and turns up the AC. She looks at the monitor - Outer June has stopped speaking.

INNER JUNE (CONT'D)  
June?

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June is asleep.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

The monitors around the room have gone dark. Inner June looks at her sleeping counterpart in disappointment.

INNER JUNE  
Again?

INT. INNER SERVER ROOM

Inner June walks in and checks each server, replacing worn out parts and clearing the dust that had settled inside. The warning lights turn off. She finds the parts she needs to fix the button, rolling around in a box she had long ago stopped bothering to close.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM - LATER

The screens around the room begin to wake up. Inner June sits up straight.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Outer June opens her eyes. Everything is as it was last night. She sits up and look at the clock on the wall: it's 11:30.

OUTER JUNE  
...again?

She rolls herself out of bed.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Outer June walks into the kitchen, recipe book in hand.

INNER JUNE (O.S.)  
Good morning. You're behind.

She waves her hand dismissively.

OUTER JUNE  
(still drowsy)  
I did that cake in... two and a  
half hours last time?

INNER JUNE (O.S.)  
Yes, but-

OUTER JUNE  
And I have four. Cake, code, get  
ready. I'll be fine.

She spots the ingredients she had taken out last night on the  
counter.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
Okay.

Visibly annoyed, she throws them away. She pulls her hand  
mixer and mixing bowls out and sits down. With the recipe  
book open to find another cake to make, she flips through the  
pages and looks up at the shelves for reference.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Inner June stares at the central monitor - it's been stuck on  
a LOADING screen for half an hour. Outer June flips back and  
forth between two recipes, occasionally taking a bite of a  
granola bar.

OUTER JUNE  
I don't think this one will be  
enough... but I'd have to double  
the other recipe and I'm not really  
in the mood...

INNER JUNE  
How much time have we spent on  
this?

OUTER JUNE  
Ten minutes?

INNER JUNE  
Forty.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - DAY

OUTER JUNE

What?

She whirls around to look at the clock - it's past noon.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)

Um...

She flips between the pages one last time, bookmarks a page, and closes the book decisively.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)

I'll double.

She gets up and opens the fridge, last night's sticky note in hand. She spots a container of blueberries on her roommate's side of the fridge.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)

These will be fine.

She pulls the rest of the ingredients and begins to mix the batter.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Outer June puts three cake pans in the oven and sets a timer. She finds a pad of sticky notes and writes a note to her roommate, promising to replace the blueberries. She sticks it on the fridge.

INNER JUNE

You ready?

OUTER JUNE

I hope so.

Outer June goes into her bedroom and brings her laptop and MAX back into the kitchen.

She sits at the table and looks at the code.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

A warning light turns on - the temperature of the servers is rising. The sound from the Server Room gets louder.

INNER JUNE

Start with the first ten lines.  
Does anything look off?

OUTER JUNE (O.S.)  
I'm getting a headache.

INNER JUNE  
Try the first five, then.

The Control Room is suddenly engulfed in the thickest fog yet. Inner June reaches for her keyboard but can't find it; the rest of her outstretched arm is lost in the fog.

OUTER JUNE (O.S.)  
It looks fine?

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - DAY

INNER JUNE (O.S.)  
(muffled)  
And the next five?

Outer June closes her eyes, holding her head in her head. She opens her eyes - the text on screen is blurred.

OUTER JUNE  
I can't focus.

A loud BEEP - her timer is going off. Giving up, she closes her laptop and takes the pans out of the oven. She sets them on the counter to cool, walks back over to the table, and stuffs her laptop and MAX into her tote bag.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
I'll finish it when I get there!

She brings the ingredients for the frosting over to the table and begins to mix.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Outer June hears a horn honking outside - Spencer's here. She finishes up the frosting, puts the cake in the cake holder, grabs her bag and rushes out of the door.

EXT. JOEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Spencer stops the car in front of the house so June can get out. She heads inside as Spencer drives off to find a parking spot.



INT. JOEY'S KITCHEN - DAY

June makes a beeline for the kitchen. She says hello to JOEY and another GUEST, drops the cake off, and goes to explore the rest of the house.

The guest walks over, takes a peek at the cake, and frowns.

GUEST 1  
Are those blueberries?

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS AROUND HOUSE - DAY

Outer June walks into a bathroom - too small. The bedroom - too messy. The porch - still wet from this morning's rain. She turns around and heads towards the living room.

INT. JOEY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Outer June finds a chair to sit in and quickly sets up her things. The room grows louder as more guests arrive. She puts on her headphones and gets to work.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

A soft whirl begins in the Server Room - instead of slowing down, the system is speeding up. Inner June checks the monitor displaying her vitals and hormone levels: her adrenaline is rising.

INNER JUNE  
Finally.

One of her monitors shows the same code Outer June is working on from her laptop.

INNER JUNE (CONT'D)  
Where were we?

INT. JOEY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Outer June, typing furiously, pauses every few minutes to look at MAX. It doesn't move. The other guests begin to decorate the room around her.

OUTER JUNE  
I can't get it to do anything.

In the background, a few guests gather around the cake. Spencer joins the conversation.

They place the cover back over the cake, pick up the holder, and rush outside. One of them finds a can of Febreze to spritz behind them.

A guest stands on the chair next to her to hang a streamer. They look down at her screen.

GUEST 2

Looks fun!

Outer June nods. She checks the time: 20 minutes left. She blinks: 18 minutes left. She keeps typing, then pauses to look over at a guest who's carefully alternating the colors of the party hats they're lining up on the counter.

OUTER JUNE

Wait...

She picks up MAX, looking at it closely. She opens the battery compartment: positive, negative, positive, positive. She pops the last battery out, places it back in correctly, and runs the code again. This time, the wheels spin.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)

Yes!

She sets MAX down and it drives itself right into the table.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June looks on with tempered excitement.

INNER JUNE

Check lines 30 and 32, that might fix it.

INT. JOEY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Outer June alters the lines of code. MAX rolls around the room, successfully avoiding the legs of the tables, chairs, and guests.

She beams - she's done with five minutes to spare. She picks up her robot, closes the program, and heads to their class page to turn it in - but the link to submit isn't there. She refreshes - still missing.

OUTER JUNE

What?

She finds the last email from her professor.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
Your project must be submitted by  
5PM... 5PM yesterday.

Her heart sinks. She closes her laptop slowly and takes a deep breath.

INNER JUNE (O.S.)  
You can send an email later.

OUTER JUNE  
Yeah.

She gets up and stumbles - she's barely eaten all day. She walks over to Spencer, visibly deflated.

INT. JOEY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Outer June points to a cheese platter.

OUTER JUNE  
Can I have some?

Spencer nods, concerned.

SPENCER  
Did you-

OUTER JUNE  
(does not want to talk  
about it)  
Are you guys done with everything?

SPENCER  
I think so, we're just waiting  
on...

Her voice trails off as one of the guests walks into the kitchen, a white cardboard box in hand.

OUTER JUNE  
Two cakes?

SPENCER  
Huh?

Spencer turns around to see a cake being pulled out of the box.

OUTER JUNE  
Where's my cake carrier?

SPENCER

Oh. We... we had to give your cake away.

Outer June's face falls even further. The rest of the guests crowd into the room.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I thought I told you she was allergic to blueberries.

OUTER JUNE

(remembering, finally)

You did.

Outer June's eyes well up with tears. JOEY moves to the front to speak.

JOEY

It looks like she's almost here so I'll keep this short... um, thank you everyone for being here! Thank you to Spencer for planning everything, thank you to June for making a cake last minute, and thank you to everyone who made sure it didn't kill the birthday girl...

The group laughs. Outer June forces on a smile.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June can't hide her devastation.

INNER JUNE

Keep it together.

INT. JOEY'S KITCHEN - DAY

The sound of keys approaching the front door.

GUEST 2

Should we turn the lights off?

GUEST 1

It's too late-

The room goes quiet. The door opens. Tears begin to fall down Outer June's face.

ALL  
Surprise!

EXT. JOEY'S PORCH - DUSK

The party continues inside. Outer June sits on a plastic lawn chair, her legs restless, eyes red and unfocused. Her mind is elsewhere.

INT. INNER SERVER ROOM

Inner June is sitting on the floor, far away from the bright monitors in the Control Room.

INNER JUNE  
I'm so sorry. I really am. I think things are irreversibly damaged up here. I've tried everything, but I can't... it's getting worse, and I don't know how to fix it. I don't know what to do.

Her voice drops to a whisper.

INNER JUNE (CONT'D)  
I don't know if there's anything I can do. I don't know.

EXT. JOEY'S PORCH - DUSK

Outer June, her thousand-yard stare unbroken, pulls her knees in so her feet rest on the edge of her chair. Spencer opens the sliding door with a plate in one hand. She sets it down on the railing and sits down.

SPENCER  
Did you get a chance to talk to her?

OUTER JUNE  
Yeah.

She pauses.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
What kind of cake is it?

SPENCER  
It's lemon. Better than I thought it would be. Not better than yours, though.

Outer June is quiet. She closes her eyes.

OUTER JUNE  
I think I'm going to pull out of  
the internship.

SPENCER  
Really?

OUTER JUNE  
I'm so tired of myself.

SPENCER  
It'll pass.

Outer June shakes her head.

OUTER JUNE  
This isn't a depressive episode,  
it's different. Worse. I've never  
felt so unlike myself. I should be  
doing better than this.

SPENCER  
What if you can't?

Outer June's eyes open.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
No, I mean - so what if you can't?  
So what if it isn't temporary?

OUTER JUNE  
Then I'm fucked.

Her eyes wander before locking in on the piece of cake in  
front of her.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
Everything is so difficult. All of  
the time. Stuff I could have  
handled a year ago is completely  
overwhelming. I can't rely on  
myself for anything. I ruin  
everything I touch. And I probably  
can't recover from whatever this is  
until I take a break, but I can't.  
Unless I drop the internship, but  
then I'll be behind.

Tears begin to fill her eyes.

OUTER JUNE (CONT'D)  
And if I go ahead with the  
internship I'm sure I'll fuck that  
up too.

Silence.

SPENCER  
Do you remember back in middle  
school, when I thought I was  
growing out of my asthma but I  
actually wasn't? So I kept  
"forgetting" to use my inhaler  
before track practice, and I always  
couldn't breathe by the end?

A flash of recognition on Outer June's face.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
I know it's different from your  
thing, but- sometimes, when you're  
waiting for the big fix to your  
problem, you forget about the small  
things you can do that help. And...  
maybe you are completely different  
from the person you used to be. But  
that doesn't mean that this version  
of you is insignificant, or any  
less deserving of care and kindness  
from yourself.

Outer June's face softens.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
You didn't, like, wake up, broken  
so you can't wake up fixed. But  
there are always ways to get back  
to yourself. Big and small.

They sit for a moment, listening to the wind blow through the  
trees, until Spencer follows Outer June's gaze to the piece  
of cake on the railing.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
Do you want it?

OUTER JUNE  
(softly, with a smile)  
No. Is there any other food left?

SPENCER  
There should be. Are you ready to  
leave?

OUTER JUNE  
I think so. Are you?

SPENCER  
Yeah.

They stand up, their voices fading as they head inside.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
What are you doing once you get back?

OUTER JUNE  
Taking a nap!

SPENCER  
Call me after if you want to talk more. If you're still thinking the internship and everything.

OUTER JUNE  
I will.

INT. JUNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Outer June walks in to the room as she'd left it: supplies on the table, mixing bowls in the sink. She begins to clean up, then pauses.

OUTER JUNE	INNER JUNE
Actually-	You know what-

She heads into her bedroom.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June sticks her hand into the pile of things at the foot of her bed, rifling it around until she pulls out a **new** notebook. Attached to the plastic wrapper is a note from her therapist from their last session months ago. She lifts her head and looks at her walls.

One by one, she begins to take down the sticky notes.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June does the same with the notes on her wall.



INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June places the stack of used sticky notes on her desk. She gets to work on her bed, hanging up her clothes and throwing things away. Once it's cleared, she sits down on top of the covers for a moment - thinking better of it, she gets up and clears the empty bottles from her desk. She sits down in her desk chair and smiles, visibly more relaxed.

OUTER JUNE  
Better.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June checks her levels: her cortisol is down. She smiles.

INNER JUNE  
Yeah.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outer June opens the notebook, clicking her pen with renewed enthusiasm.

OUTER JUNE  
Okay. Starting over.

INNER JUNE (O.S)  
So, tomorrow, we can start with that email-

OUTER JUNE  
-we could do it today.

INT. INNER CONTROL ROOM

Inner June smiles.

INNER JUNE  
Sure, we could.

Inner June reads out items for tomorrow's to do list and Outer June carefully writes them down. They're a team again. For tonight, at least.

FADE TO BLACK.