My Sister's Keeper

Anna Fitzgerald is an 11-year-old girl who was **genetically engineered** to be a perfect medical match for her older sister, Kate, who suffers from leukemia. After years of donating blood, bone marrow, and organs to keep Kate alive, Anna hires a lawyer to sue her parents for **medical emancipation**—the right to control her own body. The lawsuit forces the family to confront painful truths about love, sacrifice, and the ethics of "designing" a child to save another.

MONDAY ANNA

The chapter introduces Anna, a thirteen-year-old girl who reflects on the unconventional circumstances of her birth. Unlike most children, Anna was conceived through in vitro fertilization as a genetic match to save her older sister, Kate, who suffers from leukemia. Anna contrasts her purposeful creation with the accidental or impulsive reasons many people have children, highlighting her existential awareness of being a "designer baby." This realization leaves her questioning her place in the family, wondering if she would exist at all had Kate been healthy.

Anna's narrative shifts to a poignant moment at a pawnshop, where she attempts to sell a gold locket—a gift from her father after a bone marrow donation to Kate. The emotional weight of parting with the necklace underscores her conflicted feelings about her role as Kate's donor. The pawnshop owner's indifferent haggling and Anna's physical reluctance to let go of the locket reveal her deep attachment to the few tokens of individuality she possesses, further emphasizing her sense of being defined by her sister's illness.

The chapter delves into Anna's self-perception as an outsider, both physically and emotionally. She describes herself as "refugee-skinny" and unremarkable, but her true alienation stems from her family's relentless focus on Kate's illness. Anna contrasts her childhood—marked by medical jargon and hospital visits—with the carefree innocence typical of other kids. Her dark humor and resignation to death's presence in their lives illustrate the emotional toll of growing up in a household overshadowed by chronic illness.

The final scene depicts Anna's mother, whose escapism manifests in collecting extravagant ball gowns she'll never wear. This fleeting moment of normalcy—zipping up her mother's dress—contrasts with the family's underlying tension. The chapter closes with Anna's wry observation of her mother's unfulfilled fantasies, mirroring her own struggle to carve out an identity beyond her sister's needs. The interplay of duty, sacrifice, and longing permeates Anna's voice, setting the stage for her complex emotional journey.

MONDAY ANNA

The chapter introduces Anna, a thirteen-year-old girl who reflects on the unconventional circumstances of her birth. Unlike most children conceived by chance or accident, Anna was deliberately created through genetic selection to serve as a medical donor for her older sister, Kate, who suffers from leukemia. Anna's parents openly explained her purpose, emphasizing that she was chosen specifically to save Kate's life. This revelation leaves Anna questioning her place in the family, wondering if she would even exist had Kate been healthy. Her narrative voice blends youthful curiosity with a sober awareness of her unique role, setting the tone for her complex emotional journey.

Anna's perspective shifts to a poignant scene in a pawnshop, where she attempts to sell a cherished locket given to her by her father after a bone marrow donation. The interaction with the pawnshop owner highlights her internal struggle—her reluctance to part with the sentimental item contrasts with her determination to follow through. The locket symbolizes both her sacrifices and the emotional weight of her relationship with Kate. The pawnshop encounter serves as a metaphor for Anna's life, where she often feels compelled to give up parts of herself, both physically and emotionally, for her sister's survival.

The chapter delves deeper into Anna's self-perception and family dynamics. She describes herself as a "freak," not just in appearance but in the unusual circumstances of her existence. Her family's life revolves around Kate's illness, leaving little room for normal childhood experiences. Anna and her siblings grow up under the constant shadow of death, their lives dictated by medical crises and treatments. Anna's vocabulary is filled with medical terms, reflecting her intimate knowledge of Kate's condition and her own role as a perpetual donor. This reality shapes her worldview, making her feel more like a tool than a person.

The chapter concludes with a glimpse into Anna's strained relationship with her mother, who copes with the family's stress by indulging in extravagant but impractical purchases, like ball gowns she will never wear. This moment underscores the family's fractured normalcy and the emotional toll of Kate's illness. Anna's narrative voice remains resigned yet insightful, capturing her conflicted feelings—love for her sister, resentment of her role, and a longing for autonomy. The chapter sets the stage for Anna's internal conflict and the moral dilemmas she will face as the story progresses.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter introduces Campbell Alexander, a pragmatic lawyer who initially dismisses a teenage client, Anna Fitzgerald, assuming her lawsuit is about typical adolescent rebellion. Anna reveals her true purpose: to sue her parents for bodily autonomy after being pressured to donate a kidney to her terminally ill sister, Kate. Campbell's initial skepticism shifts when he realizes the gravity of Anna's situation—her entire life has been defined by serving as a medical donor for Kate, conceived specifically to be a genetic match. The chapter highlights Anna's resentment and exhaustion, as well as Campbell's internal conflict between professional detachment and ethical responsibility.

Anna's backstory unfolds as she explains her repeated medical donations since birth, from cord blood to bone marrow, all without her consent. She describes feeling invisible to her parents except when her body is needed to sustain Kate. Campbell recognizes the ethical dilemma of "designer babies" created for spare parts, a topic he previously dismissed. Anna's articulate plea and her meager savings—$136.87—to hire him underscore her desperation. Despite his initial reluctance, Campbell sees the case as a legal slam dunk and a chance for professional acclaim, though Anna challenges his motives, questioning whether the system will truly prioritize her autonomy.

Their dialogue reveals Campbell's cynical worldview, contrasted with Anna's sharp wit and defiance. She calls out his name's irony ("Campbell Alexander" being backward) and rejects the idea of another adult deciding her fate, even a court-appointed guardian. Campbell proposes filing for medical emancipation, but Anna remains wary, distrusting the legal system's ability to protect her interests. The tension between them mirrors the broader conflict between institutional authority and individual agency, with Anna refusing to be reduced to a means to an end.

The chapter ends with Campbell reluctantly committing to Anna's case, though his reasons remain self-serving. Anna's resilience and the moral weight of her situation force him to confront his own biases. The narrative sets up a profound exploration of ethics, family dynamics, and bodily rights, with Anna's fight symbolizing a larger critique of medical and legal systems that commodify human life. Campbell's journey from indifference to engagement hints at his potential growth, while Anna emerges as a compelling voice against systemic exploitation.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

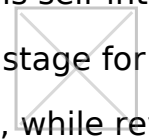
The chapter introduces Campbell Alexander, a pragmatic lawyer who views lawsuits as tools for those backed into a corner. He reflects on his father's adage about hammers and nails, drawing a parallel to the American justice system. His secretary, Kerri, organizes his messages with meticulous precision, but Campbell dismisses a call from his mother, revealing his detached demeanor. His routine is interrupted when Anna Fitzgerald, a determined teenager, enters his office seeking legal emancipation to avoid donating a kidney to her dying sister. Campbell initially misinterprets her motives, assuming she's another rebellious teen, until Anna clarifies the gravity of her situation.

Anna's backstory unfolds as she explains her role as a "spare-parts baby," conceived to provide medical resources for her sister Kate, who suffers from leukemia. She recounts a lifetime of involuntary donations—cord blood, lymphocytes, bone marrow, and stem cells—all taken without her consent. Her anger and frustration are palpable as she describes feeling invisible to her parents except when her body is needed. Campbell, though initially reluctant, begins to recognize the ethical complexity of her case. Anna's medical knowledge and resolve challenge his assumptions, prompting him to reconsider taking her case despite his usual avoidance of high-maintenance clients.

The dialogue shifts to the legal and moral implications of Anna's predicament. Campbell questions her motives, probing whether she's truly prepared for the consequences of refusing to donate. Anna's response—that she's "here, aren't I?"—underscores her desperation. She offers her meager savings as payment, revealing her determination. Campbell, though cynical, sees the case as a straightforward win: no court would force Anna to donate an organ, and the publicity would benefit his career. He agrees to file a petition for medical emancipation, though

Anna remains skeptical of the system’s ability to prioritize her autonomy over her family’s needs.

The chapter concludes with a moment of levity as Anna teasingly points out the irony of Campbell’s backward name, lightening the tension. This exchange hints at a budding rapport between them. Campbell’s decision to take the case marks a turning point, blending his self-interest with a grudging acknowledgment of Anna’s plight. The chapter sets the stage for a legal battle that will test boundaries of family, ethics, and bodily autonomy, while revealing glimpses of Campbell’s guarded humanity beneath his professional exterior.



MONDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara noticing a mysterious bruise on her two-year-old daughter Kate’s back, shaped like a four-leaf clover. Her son Jesse, curious, asks if it means Kate is lucky, while Sara tries to rub it off, assuming it’s dirt. The family’s mundane yet intimate bathtime routine is interrupted by Brian, Sara’s husband, sharing a story about a legal case involving cigars and insurance fraud. The scene highlights the chaotic yet loving dynamics of their household, where parenting and marriage coexist in a series of small, tender moments.

As the family prepares for bed, Sara reflects on her past career as a civil attorney and her decision to become a stay-at-home mother. She contrasts her life with her sister Suzanne’s high-powered finance career, acknowledging societal expectations but affirming her choice to prioritize motherhood. Brian, a firefighter, subtly probes whether Sara misses her legal career, to which she responds with humor, emphasizing her contentment with her current role. The exchange underscores the unspoken understanding and support between them, as well as Sara’s firm belief in her path.

The next morning, Sara discovers Kate sleeping unusually late, which raises concerns about her health. Jesse, ever the mischievous older brother, admits to trying to wake Kate by poking her. Sara’s maternal instincts kick in as she notices more bruises on Kate’s spine, prompting a visit to the pediatrician. The doctor orders blood tests, and Kate’s fearful reaction to the needles adds emotional weight to the scene. Sara’s internal monologue reveals her anxiety and helplessness, as she grapples with the possibility of something seriously wrong with her daughter.

The chapter concludes with the pediatrician delivering troubling news about Kate’s low white blood cell count, hinting at a potential autoimmune deficiency or lab error. Sara’s fear and confusion are palpable as she struggles to comprehend the medical jargon, regretting her lack of medical knowledge. The unresolved tension leaves the

reader with a sense of foreboding, setting the stage for the family’s impending crisis. The chapter masterfully blends everyday family life with an undercurrent of looming uncertainty, capturing Sara’s love and vulnerability as a mother.

MONDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara noticing a peculiar bruise shaped like a four-leaf clover on her two-year-old daughter Kate's back during bath time. Her son Jesse questions if it signifies luck, while Sara initially dismisses it as dirt. The family's mundane yet intimate routine unfolds as Sara tends to the children, and her husband Brian shares a humorous anecdote about an insurance claim involving cigars. The scene captures the chaotic yet tender dynamics of family life, juxtaposed with Brian's professional insights as a firefighter.

As the evening progresses, Sara reflects on her transition from a civil attorney to a stay-at-home mother, contrasting her choice with her sister Suzanne's high-powered finance career. She muses on the fulfillment she finds in motherhood, despite societal expectations. Brian quietly asks if she misses her legal career, to which Sara responds with a lighthearted dismissal. The chapter highlights Sara's internal conflict and contentment, emphasizing her belief that personal fulfillment outweighs professional accolades.

The next morning, Sara wakes to find Jesse has attempted to prepare breakfast, while Kate remains unusually asleep. Concerned, Sara checks on Kate and discovers a series of bruises along her spine. She takes Kate to the pediatrician, where Jesse's teasing about needles frightens Kate. The blood draw becomes an ordeal, with Kate screaming and struggling as the nurse fails to draw blood on the first attempt. Sara's anxiety grows as she waits for the test results, hoping for a simple explanation.

Dr. Wayne returns with troubling news: Kate's white blood cell count is abnormally low, suggesting a potential autoimmune deficiency or lab error. Sara's lack of medical knowledge leaves her feeling helpless and fearful for her daughter's health. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with Sara grappling with the uncertainty of Kate's condition, foreshadowing a deeper crisis that may disrupt their family's fragile

equilibrium.

MONDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a firefighter responding to an incinerator fire at Brown University's medical school, where a body has become stuck, causing the blaze. The dean explains that the incinerator is routinely used for anatomical remains after classes. The firefighter, serving as captain, assesses the situation and decides against hosing down the flames, as it could spread biohazardous waste. Instead, he opts to contain the fire and let it burn out, demonstrating his experience and calm under pressure. The scene highlights the tension between urgency and calculated action in emergency response.

The narrative then shifts to the firefighter's family dinner, revealing a household marked by both routine and underlying strain. His daughter Kate, who has a portacath for medical treatment, makes dark jokes about her condition, while his son Jesse arrives high, sparking tension with his sister. The firefighter's wife, Sara, struggles to maintain normalcy, as seen in her frustration with the overcooked roast. The family dynamics are fraught with unspoken worries, particularly around Kate's health and Jesse's substance use, yet moments of humor briefly lighten the mood.

The focus turns to Anna, the youngest daughter, whose unusual silence and absence of her cherished locket signal distress. Unlike her siblings, Anna is typically the family's steady presence, making her withdrawn behavior alarming. When Kate notices the missing locket, Anna deflects, deepening the mystery. The family's preoccupation with their own conflicts causes them to overlook Anna's quiet exit from the table, underscoring her sudden emotional distance and the fragility of their collective attention.

The chapter closes with the firefighter returning to the station, where his crew engages in banter while preparing food. The contrast between the chaotic family dinner and the camaraderie at work emphasizes his dual roles as both a stabilizing force and a weary

observer. The unresolved tension at home—particularly Anna's unexplained behavior—lingers, suggesting deeper familial struggles beneath the surface of their everyday interactions. The chapter masterfully intertwines professional duty and personal turmoil, leaving the reader curious about the family's unresolved dynamics.

MONDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with the narrator, a firefighter, responding to an incinerator fire at Brown University's medical school. The dean explains that the blaze was caused by a large body stuck in the incinerator, a routine disposal method for anatomy class remains. The narrator, cautious and experienced, decides against immediate action, recognizing that water could spread biohazardous waste. Instead, he opts to monitor the fire, understanding that it will eventually burn out on its own. This scene highlights the tension between urgency and calculated restraint in emergency response.

The narrative shifts to the narrator's family dinner, revealing a strained but familiar dynamic. His daughter Kate, who has a portacath for dialysis, makes dark jokes about her health, while his son Jesse arrives high, sparking tension with Kate. The narrator's wife, Sara, struggles to maintain normalcy, overcooking the roast in her distraction. The family's interactions are laced with unspoken worries, particularly about Kate's illness and Jesse's drug use, yet they cling to routines like shared meals as a fragile anchor.

Anna, the narrator's typically cheerful daughter, is unusually withdrawn, her missing locket a silent alarm. Her absence from the table goes unnoticed until later, underscoring how the family's focus on Kate's health and Jesse's struggles has left Anna overlooked. The narrator reflects on Anna's past vibrancy, contrasting it with her current silence, which he realizes carries its own weight. This moment exposes the unintended consequences of a family coping with chronic crisis.

The chapter closes with the narrator back at the fire station, where camaraderie among colleagues provides a respite from domestic tensions. The contrast between the controlled chaos of firefighting and the emotional complexities of home life underscores the narrator's dual roles. The chapter weaves together themes of responsibility, vigilance, and the quiet fractures in a family navigating illness,

addiction, and unspoken grief.

TUESDAY ANNA

The chapter introduces Anna, a teenager who often fantasizes about belonging to a different family, feeling like an outsider among her parents and siblings. She humorously imagines her "real" parents whisking her away to a luxurious life, yet admits the first person she'd share the news with is her sister Kate. The narrative quickly shifts to reveal Kate's serious health condition—she undergoes frequent dialysis due to kidney failure. Anna describes the mundane yet intimate moments during Kate's treatments, where she acts as Kate's eyes and ears, playing games or observing their surroundings to distract her sister from the monotony of the procedure.

The family dynamic becomes more complex as Anna's mother discusses kidney transplantation, casually mentioning that Anna's kidney could be a potential match for Kate. Anna internally grapples with the risks and long-term consequences of kidney donation, contrasting it with minor medical procedures. Her conflicted feelings highlight the moral and emotional weight of her potential sacrifice. The tension escalates when Vern Stackhouse, a family acquaintance and sheriff, arrives unexpectedly to serve legal papers, disrupting the already fragile atmosphere in the hospital room.

The documents reveal a shocking development: Anna is petitioning for medical emancipation, seeking the right to make her own medical decisions and refusing further treatments for Kate's benefit. The revelation stuns Anna's mother, who is caught between her two daughters—one in physical pain and the other in emotional turmoil. Anna's guilt and relief are palpable as she observes her mother's distress and Kate's sudden medical crisis, which momentarily diverts attention from the legal bombshell.

The chapter ends with Anna fleeing the room, seeking refuge in an unlikely place—the maternity ward—where she contrasts the joy of new life with the chaos of her own

family's struggles. The juxtaposition underscores her isolation and the weight of her decision, leaving the reader to ponder the ethical and emotional complexities of her situation. The abrupt ending hints at the unresolved tension and the difficult choices Anna must face in the chapters to come.

TUESDAY ANNA

The chapter introduces Anna, a teenager who often fantasizes about belonging to a different family due to her physical dissimilarity from her parents and siblings. She humorously imagines her "real" parents whisking her away to a luxurious life, yet admits the first person she'd share this fantasy with is her sister Kate. The narrative quickly shifts to reveal Kate's serious health condition—she undergoes frequent dialysis due to failing kidneys, a situation where Anna plays a supportive role, keeping Kate entertained during her treatments. The sisters share a close bond, with Anna acting as Kate's "eyes and ears" during her medical routines.

The chapter delves into the complexities of Anna's role as a potential kidney donor for Kate. Anna reflects on the risks and long-term consequences of kidney donation, contrasting it with minor medical procedures. While she acknowledges the gravity of the surgery, she also recognizes the selflessness involved in saving Kate's life. This internal conflict is juxtaposed with a lighthearted moment where their mother shares a pamphlet about kidney transplants, sparking a macabre yet humorous exchange about the logistics of having three kidneys.

Tension escalates when Vern Stackhouse, a local sheriff, arrives to serve legal papers to Anna's mother. The documents reveal Anna's petition for medical emancipation, seeking to prevent further medical procedures for Kate's benefit. The revelation shocks the family, with Anna feeling a mix of guilt and relief as Kate suddenly experiences pain, diverting their mother's attention. Anna's emotional turmoil is palpable as she flees the room, unable to face the consequences of her actions.

The chapter concludes with Anna seeking refuge in the maternity ward, a stark contrast to the chaos she left behind. The juxtaposition of new life with her family's medical struggles underscores the chapter's themes of sacrifice, identity, and moral ambiguity. Anna's actions, though drastic, highlight her desire for autonomy amid a

lifetime of being defined by her sister's illness. The unresolved tension leaves readers questioning the ethical and emotional ramifications of her decision.

TUESDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara's reflection on the unsettling yet oddly comforting atmosphere of the oncology wing, where she and her family await Dr. Chance. The sterile environment and the shared experience of other families provide a strange sense of belonging. Dr. Chance's initial cold demeanor worries Sara, but his unexpected act of drawing a face on Kate's rubber glove balloon reveals a kinder side, offering a glimmer of hope in their daunting medical journey.

Sara then shifts to recounting her strained relationship with her sister, Suzanne, who embodies success and perfection. Despite their close bond in childhood, their lives diverged sharply, with Sara's choices—marrying young and prioritizing family over career—leading to mutual estrangement. Suzanne's achievements cast a long shadow, making Sara feel inadequate, though she admires her sister's strength. The emotional distance between them is palpable, highlighted by their infrequent and awkward phone calls.

The narrative returns to the hospital, where Sara and Brian receive a grim diagnosis for Kate: acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL). The medical team explains the aggressive treatment plan, including chemotherapy's harsh side effects and the uncertain prognosis. The nurses' patience contrasts with the doctors' detachment, emphasizing the emotional toll on the family. Sara's heartbreak over Kate's impending hair loss symbolizes the visible markers of her illness, making the diagnosis painfully real.

The chapter concludes with the doctors outlining potential future treatments, including bone marrow transplants, and questioning whether Kate's brother could be a match. This sparks a new wave of fear and uncertainty for Sara, who grapples with the overwhelming reality of her daughter's illness. The medical jargon and bleak outlook leave the family reeling, yet Dr. Chance's earlier kindness offers a fragile thread of

hope amid the despair.

TUESDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara's reflection on the unexpected sense of belonging she feels at the hospital's oncology wing, where families share a common struggle. She, her husband Brian, and their daughter Kate meet Dr. Harrison Chance, whose initially cold demeanor worries them. However, his playful gesture of drawing a face on Kate's rubber glove balloon reveals a kinder side, offering a glimmer of hope in their daunting medical journey. The scene captures the tension and fleeting moments of relief that define their experience.

Sara then shifts to recounting her strained relationship with her sister Suzanne, a successful and commanding figure who once served as her role model. Despite their close bond in childhood, their lives diverged due to Sara's choices—marrying a man without a college degree and prioritizing motherhood over a career. The emotional distance between them is palpable, underscored by Sara's hesitation to reach out after years of silence. Their brief phone call hints at unresolved tensions and the complexity of sibling dynamics.

The narrative returns to Kate's diagnosis of APL, a rare and aggressive form of leukemia. Sara and Brian meet with a medical team who explain the grim prognosis and rigorous treatment plan, including chemotherapy's harsh side effects. The nurses' compassion contrasts with the doctors' clinical detachment, emphasizing the emotional toll on the parents. Sara's grief over Kate's impending hair loss symbolizes the visible markers of illness, while Brian's desperate questions reflect their fear and helplessness.

Dr. Chance outlines potential future treatments, including bone marrow transplants, and asks about Kate's sibling, Jesse. Sara's sudden worry about Jesse's health adds another layer of anxiety. The chapter ends on an unresolved note, leaving the family—and readers—grappling with the uncertainty of Kate's survival. The blend of

medical detail and raw emotion paints a poignant picture of a family confronting a life-altering crisis.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell Alexander, a sharp-witted attorney, fielding an early morning call from his mother about his father's latest scandal. Irritated by her dramatics, he deflects her concerns with dry humor and hangs up, reflecting on the burdens of familial ties. His service dog, Judge, serves as both a companion and a symbolic counterpoint to human folly. Campbell's luxurious but sparsely stocked apartment reflects his detached, fast-paced lifestyle—a man who prioritizes work and convenience over domesticity, yet surrounds himself with curated high-end possessions.

Campbell's morning routine is disrupted when he arrives at Rosie's, his usual café, only to find his regular table occupied and his favorite waitress, Ophelia, gone. The café's quirky atmosphere contrasts with his frustration as he deals with a dismissive waiter who questions Judge's presence. The exchange reveals Campbell's quick wit and disdain for unnecessary intrusions into his personal space. His brief musing on Ophelia's sudden elopement with an eccentric artist underscores his cynical view of love as fleeting and unreliable.

A moment of tension arises when Campbell spots a woman outside the café who reminds him of someone from his past. Before he can confirm her identity, a passing bus obscures his view, leaving him unsettled. This fleeting encounter hints at unresolved personal history, juxtaposed with another interruption—his mother's relentless calls, which he ignores. The scene transitions to his law office, where he barks orders at his assistant, Kerri, only to find Anna Fitzgerald, his young client, unexpectedly polishing his doorknob.

The chapter's climax centers on a phone call from Anna's mother, Sara, who claims Anna wants to drop her lawsuit. Campbell, skeptical, presses Anna for the truth, revealing her defiance and the strained dynamics between her and her family. The

exchange highlights Campbell's professional detachment and Anna's quiet determination, setting the stage for a legal and emotional confrontation. The chapter closes with unresolved tension, leaving readers curious about Anna's motives and Campbell's next move.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell Alexander, a sharp-witted attorney, fielding an early morning call from his mother about his father's alleged affair. Irritated by her constant drama, he deflects her concerns with dry humor and hangs up, revealing his strained relationship with his parents. His service dog, Judge, serves as both a companion and a symbolic counterpoint to human folly. Campbell's luxurious but sparsely stocked apartment reflects his detached, fast-paced lifestyle, emphasizing his preference for dining out over domesticity. The scene establishes his sardonic worldview and self-reliant nature.

Campbell's morning routine is disrupted when he arrives at Rosie's, his usual café, only to find his regular table occupied by a stranger. The absence of Ophelia, a waitress he flirted with, and her sudden elopement with an eccentric artist further unsettle him. A confrontation with a skeptical waiter about Judge's status as a service dog showcases Campbell's quick wit and disdain for societal norms. Through the café window, he spots a mysterious woman who momentarily captivates him, hinting at a deeper, unresolved personal history before she disappears from view.

The narrative shifts to Campbell's law office, where he barks orders at his assistant, Kerri, displaying his professional intensity. Anna Fitzgerald, a young client, surprises him by polishing his doorknob—a task he supposedly assigned her. Their interaction is charged with tension, especially when Campbell receives a call from Anna's mother, Sara, who insists Anna is dropping her lawsuit. Campbell's skepticism and Anna's evasiveness suggest a conflict between familial pressure and personal agency, leaving the legal outcome uncertain.

The chapter closes with Campbell confronting Anna about her mother's claims, exposing the disconnect between Anna's actions and her family's expectations. Anna's nonchalant defiance and Kerri's eavesdropping add layers of intrigue, setting the stage

for a legal and emotional showdown. Campbell's sharp dialogue and Anna's guarded responses highlight the themes of autonomy and manipulation, leaving readers questioning who truly holds power in their attorney-client relationship.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna's morbid reflections on her own hypothetical funeral, imagining sparse attendance and minimal impact. She contrasts this with her sister Kate's future funeral, which she envisions as a crowded, high-profile event due to Kate's battle with cancer. Anna's musings reveal her feelings of invisibility and resentment, as well as her deep awareness of Kate's central role in their family dynamics. The scene shifts abruptly to a courthouse, where Anna meets with Judge DeSalvo to discuss her petition for medical emancipation, creating a jarring transition that mirrors Anna's emotional turmoil.

In the courthouse scene, Judge DeSalvo's informal demeanor—wearing flip-flops and offering Anna a Coke—initially puts her at ease. Their conversation takes a scientific turn when the judge mentions how Coke can dissolve a baby tooth, which Anna internalizes as a metaphor for her own emotional dissolution. The judge probes Anna's conflicting statements about her desire to drop the lawsuit against her parents, highlighting the tension between her mother's claims and her lawyer's position. This confrontation forces Anna to articulate her true feelings about being a perpetual medical donor for Kate.

Anna's emotional breakdown comes when she notices the judge drinking apple juice, triggering a vivid memory of a prank she and Kate played on a nurse. This bittersweet recollection underscores the complexity of Anna's relationship with her sister—simultaneously resentful yet deeply connected. Her tears reveal the unbearable pressure of being expected to continually sacrifice her body for Kate's survival. The judge, recognizing Anna's distress, proposes appointing a guardian ad litem to assess her best interests, creating a temporary reprieve from the immediate legal pressure.

The chapter concludes with Anna's mother entering the room, interrupted by Anna's lawyer before she can reach her daughter. Judge DeSalvo formalizes his decision to

appoint a guardian, setting up a two-week evaluation period. Anna's mother's unspoken concern about Kate's timeline hints at the urgent medical context hanging over the legal proceedings. The chapter masterfully intertwines Anna's internal struggles with the external legal battle, painting a poignant picture of a teenager fighting for bodily autonomy while grappling with guilt, love, and family loyalty.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna's morbid reflections on her own hypothetical funeral, imagining sparse attendance and minimal impact. She contrasts this with the grand funeral her sister Kate would receive, highlighting the disparity in how their lives—and potential deaths—are perceived. Anna's vivid imagery of her own unnoticed passing versus Kate's highly publicized mourning underscores her feelings of invisibility within her family dynamic, where Kate's illness dominates all attention.

Anna then shifts to a courtroom scene where she meets Judge DeSalvo, who wears flip-flops—a detail that momentarily comforts her. Their conversation begins casually, discussing Coke's corrosive properties, but quickly turns serious as the judge probes Anna's conflicting statements about her lawsuit for medical emancipation. The judge's informal demeanor contrasts with the gravity of the situation, emphasizing Anna's internal struggle between familial loyalty and personal autonomy.

A flashback reveals Anna's close bond with Kate, as they share a darkly humorous prank involving apple juice and a nurse. This memory, triggered by the judge's drink, momentarily distracts Anna from her composure, leading to an emotional breakdown. Her tears expose the depth of her conflict: she loves her family but cannot continue being a medical donor for Kate. The judge's observation of her distress prompts him to appoint a guardian ad litem to assess her best interests.

The chapter concludes with Anna's mother reacting to the judge's decision, hinting at the urgency of Kate's deteriorating health. Anna's lawyer signals cautious optimism, while the unresolved tension between familial duty and individual agency lingers. The scene sets the stage for the upcoming legal battle, with Anna caught between her love for her sister and her desperate need for bodily autonomy.

WEDNESDAY JESSE

The chapter introduces Jesse, a rebellious and self-destructive protagonist who recalls her childhood fascination with fire, sparked by stealing matches and igniting Jean Nate Bath Splash. Her sister Anna, the only person who understands her, joins in her dangerous games, revealing their deep bond beneath their surface differences. Jesse's nihilistic worldview is evident as she drives recklessly, contemplating her worth as an organ donor and the irony of her heart being transplanted into someone else. Her interactions with Duracell Dan, a homeless Vietnam vet, highlight her unconventional alliances and the cryptic, almost prophetic nature of their exchanges.

Jesse's destructive tendencies escalate as she sets fire to a warehouse, leaving her initials (JBF) in sawdust and perchloric acid before igniting them. The act is calculated and symbolic, mirroring her inner turmoil and desire to leave no trace. As the fire rages, she observes the chaos from a distance, using binoculars to spot her firefighter father among the responders. The scene underscores her complex relationship with her family, particularly her father, whose profession contrasts sharply with her arsonist tendencies.

The chapter shifts to a domestic crisis as Jesse returns home to find her sister Kate severely ill, vomiting blood. Her mother's frantic plea for help forces Jesse into a rare moment of responsibility, carrying Kate to the car for a rushed trip to the hospital. The stark contrast between Jesse's destructive actions and this sudden familial duty highlights her internal conflict and the fragile dynamics of her family. Kate's frail condition and the urgency of the situation momentarily pierce Jesse's hardened exterior.

Throughout the chapter, Jesse's voice is raw and unfiltered, blending dark humor with profound despair. Her actions—arson, reckless driving, and alliances with outsiders like Dan—paint her as a character teetering on the edge. Yet, the glimpses of her

relationships with Anna and Kate reveal a longing for connection beneath her defiance. The chapter ends on a tense note, leaving readers to ponder whether Jesse's destructive path will continue or if her sister's crisis might catalyze a change.

WEDNESDAY JESSE

The chapter introduces Jesse, a rebellious and self-destructive teenager who recalls her childhood fascination with fire, sparked by stealing matches and igniting Jean Nate Bath Splash with her sister Anna. Despite their surface differences, Jesse feels a deep kinship with Anna, seeing her as the only proof of their shared family roots. Jesse's reckless behavior extends to speeding in her Jeep, fantasizing about fatal crashes, and morbidly pondering the value of her organs. Her nihilistic outlook is underscored by her disdain for others, encapsulated in her recurring thought: "Fuck them all."

Jesse's journey takes her to an underpass where she interacts with Duracell Dan, a homeless Vietnam vet who believes batteries contain secret CIA messages. Their transactional relationship involves Jesse providing food in exchange for Dan safeguarding her stolen chemicals and sawdust. Dan delivers a cryptic message—"Think twice"—which Jesse dismisses, though it unsettles her. This encounter highlights Jesse's reliance on outsiders like Dan, who exist on society's fringes, much like herself. Their dialogue reinforces Jesse's distrust of authority and her penchant for chaos.

Armed with perchloric acid and sawdust, Jesse proceeds to an abandoned warehouse in Olneyville, where she meticulously sets a fire, leaving her initials (JBF) as a fleeting signature. The act is both calculated and impulsive, mirroring her internal turmoil. As the fire erupts, Jesse watches from a distance, observing the arrival of firefighters, including her father, Fitzgerald. The scene evokes a childhood memory of her mother crying at dawn, a moment Jesse misunderstood but now sees as symbolic of deeper family pain.

The chapter culminates in a domestic crisis as Jesse returns home to find her sister Kate violently ill, vomiting blood. Her mother, overwhelmed and unable to reach Jesse's father, demands Jesse drive them to the hospital. Jesse carries Kate, noting her

frailness, which contrasts sharply with her own destructive energy. This abrupt shift from arson to family emergency underscores the duality of Jesse’s life—her outward rebellion and the latent responsibility she feels toward her family, however grudgingly.

WEDNESDAY SARA

The chapter opens in a hair salon where three pregnant women, including the narrator, discuss baby names. The casual banter contrasts with the narrator's hidden reality—her unborn child was conceived through genetic screening to be a perfect match for her three-year-old daughter, Kate, who suffers from aggressive leukemia. While the other women exchange lighthearted naming ideas, the narrator reflects on how she hasn't chosen a name, having focused solely on her baby's potential to save Kate's life. This moment underscores her emotional detachment from the pregnancy itself, viewing the child primarily as a medical solution.

The narrative shifts to reveal Kate's relapse after a brief remission, prompting the narrator and her husband, Brian, to pursue IVF with preimplantation genetic testing. The narrator recalls the careful planning behind this pregnancy, acknowledging she never allowed herself to envision this child beyond her role as Kate's donor. Interspersed are mundane family moments—driving her children, answering her son Jesse's innocent questions—which starkly contrast with the gravity of Kate's condition. A particularly poignant moment occurs when Jesse asks if the cemetery they pass is "where Kate will go," forcing the narrator to confront her deepest fears.

The story then transitions to a TV interview where the couple defends their controversial decision to conceive a "savior sibling." Brian explains their desperate attempt to find a bone marrow match for Kate, emphasizing they aren't creating a "designer baby" but simply trying to save their daughter's life. The narrator's witty response about sibling rivalry lightens the tone, yet the underlying tension remains—this child's existence is inextricably tied to Kate's survival. The interview highlights societal ethical debates while humanizing the family's painful dilemma.

The chapter closes with the narrator going into labor on New Year's Eve, symbolizing both an ending and a beginning. This pivotal moment encapsulates the chapter's

central tension: hope for Kate's survival weighed against the moral complexities of bringing a child into the world for medical purposes. The narrative masterfully balances everyday family dynamics with profound ethical questions, leaving readers anticipating the consequences of this carefully engineered birth.

WEDNESDAY SARA

The chapter opens in a hair salon where three pregnant women, including the narrator Sara, discuss baby names in a lighthearted exchange. One woman considers unconventional names like "Sleet," while Sara reveals she is expecting her third child—a girl. Though the conversation is casual, Sara's internal monologue reveals deeper stakes: this baby was genetically engineered to be a perfect match for her three-year-old daughter, Kate, who suffers from aggressive leukemia. Sara reflects on her inability to name the unborn child, as she has only thought of her as a means to save Kate’s life, not as an individual.

The narrative shifts to Sara’s memories of Kate’s battle with cancer. After a brief remission, Kate relapsed, prompting Sara and her husband, Brian, to pursue genetic screening to conceive a savior sibling. Sara admits she always feared the worst, even during hopeful moments, and took proactive steps to ensure a donor match. The family’s ordinary routines—like driving with Kate and their son, Jesse—are punctuated by Jesse’s innocent yet heartbreaking questions about death, highlighting the emotional toll of Kate’s illness.

Sara and Brian appear on a TV show to discuss their controversial decision to genetically engineer their unborn child. Brian defends their choice, emphasizing they are not seeking a "designer baby" but a lifeline for Kate. The couple faces criticism, but Brian argues their motives are purely medical. Sara’s witty response to the reporter’s question about the baby’s future underscores her hope for normalcy, though the underlying tension remains palpable.

The chapter concludes with Sara going into labor on New Year’s Eve, symbolizing both an end and a beginning. The juxtaposition of mundane moments and life-and-death decisions paints a poignant picture of a family grappling with love, sacrifice, and ethical dilemmas. Sara’s journey reflects the complexities of parenthood, where hope

and desperation intertwine in the fight to save a child.

WEDNESDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia's frustration as her sister Isobel reorganizes her apartment, highlighting their contrasting personalities—Julia's rebellious past versus her current conventional life, and Isobel's creative, meticulous nature. Their tense dynamic escalates when Julia cruelly references Isobel's recent breakup, causing her sister to retreat in tears. Despite their bickering, Julia's protective instincts emerge as she comforts Isobel, revealing their deep, if complicated, bond. The sisters reconcile with humor, underscoring their ability to navigate conflicts through shared history and wit.

Julia's professional life interrupts the personal drama when Judge DeSalvo calls, asking her to serve as a guardian ad litem for a 13-year-old girl, Anna, seeking medical emancipation. Though initially hesitant, Julia agrees, hinting at unresolved personal stakes in the case. The urgency of the situation contrasts with the calm exterior of Anna's well-kept home, where Julia meets the wary preteen. Anna's cautious demeanor and cryptic mention of "Kate" pique Julia's curiosity, setting the stage for their fraught but pivotal relationship.

At the zoo, Julia attempts to connect with Anna, who remains guarded despite Julia's efforts to create a relaxed environment. Anna's brief revelations—her past as a hockey goalie and her isolation from friends—hint at deeper struggles. Julia's observation that Anna avoids letting her team down subtly mirrors the girl's broader sense of responsibility, possibly tied to her family situation. The interaction underscores Julia's challenge in breaking through Anna's defenses to understand her true motivations.

The chapter closes with Julia reflecting on the zebras' symbolic contrast to life's complexities, mirroring her own role as a mediator in Anna's black-and-white legal battle. Anna's reluctance to engage contrasts with Julia's determination to advocate for her, foreshadowing the emotional and ethical complexities ahead. The unresolved

tension between Julia's personal doubts and professional duty leaves the reader anticipating the next steps in their intertwined journeys.

WEDNESDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia's frustration as her sister Isobel reorganizes her apartment, highlighting their contrasting personalities. Julia, the more rebellious sibling, now leads a conventional life, while Isobel, the former "Goody Two-shoes," lives unconventionally as a lesbian artist. Their tension escalates when Julia cruelly references Isobel's recent breakup, causing a tearful confrontation. Despite their bickering, Julia comforts Isobel, revealing their deep, if complicated, bond. The sisters reconcile with humor, joking about naming Julia's toilet after Isobel's ex, Janet, showcasing their ability to navigate conflict through wit.

Julia's professional life interrupts the personal drama when Judge DeSalvo calls, asking her to serve as a guardian ad litem for a 13-year-old girl, Anna, seeking medical emancipation. Though hesitant, Julia agrees, recognizing the urgency. The case’s complexity is hinted at by phrases like "mother with legal background," suggesting potential familial conflict. Julia’s internal struggle is evident as she questions her ability to help Anna, mirroring her own unresolved emotional needs. The chapter subtly parallels Julia’s role as a protector in both her personal and professional life.

The narrative shifts to Julia’s first meeting with Anna, who is wary and independent. Anna’s skepticism about Julia’s identity reflects her cautious nature, while Julia admires her discernment. Their interaction reveals Anna’s concern for her sister Kate, hinting at the family dynamics central to the case. Julia’s decision to take Anna to the zoo—a tactic she uses to put children at ease—fails to break through Anna’s reserve, emphasizing the girl’s maturity and the case’s gravity. Anna’s brief mention of hockey and her guilt over missing games underscores her sense of responsibility.

The chapter closes with Julia reflecting on the zebras at the zoo, symbolizing her desire for a black-and-white world amid life’s complexities. Anna’s guardedness and Julia’s self-doubt linger, foreshadowing the challenges ahead. Julia’s internal

conflict—balancing her professional duty with personal insecurities—mirrors the broader themes of family, responsibility, and moral ambiguity. The chapter sets the stage for Julia’s journey as Anna’s advocate while exploring her own need for emotional resolution.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell, a lawyer, engaging in a heated phone debate with the principal of Ponaganset High School over the political correctness of a Native American student group naming their basketball league "The Whiteys." Campbell defends the students' right to free speech, drawing parallels to the school's own controversial mascot, the Chieftains. She dismisses the principal's threats of litigation, highlighting constitutional protections, and ends the call after sarcastically suggesting he sue broader societal references like the White House. The exchange showcases Campbell's sharp wit and unyielding stance on individual rights.

After the call, Campbell instructs her assistant to reassure her client, Ernie Fishkiller, that the lawsuit threat is baseless. She then reflects on her exhaustion, triggered by fleeting memories of a past conversation about reincarnation and a puppy chasing its tail. Her thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of Julia Romano, a guardian ad litem assigned to Anna Fitzgerald's case and a figure from Campbell's past. Their reunion is tense, filled with unspoken history and awkward small talk, as Julia remarks on Campbell's unchanged defiance of societal expectations.

The conversation shifts to Anna Fitzgerald's case, revealing Julia's concerns that Anna's mother may be undermining the legal process by convincing Anna the trial won't happen. Campbell proposes a drastic solution: obtaining a restraining order to remove Anna's mother from the home. Julia is appalled, arguing this would destabilize Anna further, while Campbell insists it's necessary to protect her client's legal interests. Their professional disagreement quickly escalates into a personal clash, with Julia accusing Campbell of prioritizing her own success over Anna's well-being.

The chapter concludes with their unresolved tension, as Julia's criticism forces Campbell to confront her own motivations. Judge, Campbell's service dog, becomes a physical manifestation of her inner turmoil, whining and tugging at her clothes. The

encounter leaves Campbell emotionally shaken, grappling with both the weight of Anna's case and the unresolved history with Julia. The chapter underscores themes of personal accountability, the clash between legal strategy and human empathy, and the lingering impact of past relationships.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell, a lawyer, engaging in a heated phone debate with the principal of Ponaganset High School over the political correctness of a Native American student group naming their basketball league "The Whiteys." Campbell defends the students' right to free speech, drawing parallels to the school's own controversial mascot, the Chieftains. The conversation ends with the principal hanging up, and Campbell instructs his assistant to reassure his client, Ernie Fishkiller, that the lawsuit threat is empty. The scene highlights Campbell's sharp wit and unyielding stance on constitutional rights, even as he balances a heavy workload.

Amidst his professional duties, Campbell reflects on a past conversation with a woman, possibly a romantic partner, about reincarnation and their playful banter about returning as a cat or catnip. This fleeting memory contrasts with his current stress, as he struggles with sleep deprivation and a challenging new case involving a drug dealer caught on videotape. His musings are interrupted when Julia Romano, a guardian ad litem and a figure from his past, unexpectedly enters his office. Their reunion is tense, filled with unspoken history and unresolved emotions, as they awkwardly navigate small talk about her hair and their shared past.

Julia reveals she is assigned to Anna Fitzgerald's case, shifting the focus to their professional roles. Campbell's attempt to steer the conversation toward Anna is met with skepticism from Julia, who questions his commitment to understanding the young client's emotional needs. Their exchange grows contentious as Campbell proposes a drastic legal measure to remove Anna's mother from the home, arguing it’s necessary to protect Anna's legal rights. Julia vehemently opposes this, accusing Campbell of prioritizing his own interests over Anna's well-being, echoing the novel's broader theme of ethical dilemmas in legal advocacy.

The chapter concludes with their argument escalating, as Julia challenges Campbell's motives and his past abandonment of their relationship. Campbell, visibly affected, struggles to maintain his composure while his service dog, Judge, senses his distress. The confrontation underscores the tension between Campbell's professional detachment and Julia's empathy, leaving their personal and professional dynamics unresolved. The scene sets the stage for further exploration of Campbell's character and the complexities of Anna's case, blending legal drama with emotional depth.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna reflecting on her family's photo shelf, a visual timeline of their lives. She notes the disparity in the number of photos of herself compared to her siblings, Jesse and Kate, hinting at her feelings of being overlooked. The photos evoke a sense of nostalgia and longing, as Anna contemplates the unspoken messages they carry—love, attention, and the passage of time. Her father calls to check on her while her mother stays at the hospital with Kate, revealing the family's ongoing struggle with Kate's illness. Anna's internal monologue underscores her isolation and the emotional weight of her sister's condition.

Anna's thoughts shift to her identity as "the girl with the sick sister," pondering how her life might differ if Kate were healthy. She questions whether people treat her kindly out of genuine affection or pity, and wonders if her true personality is overshadowed by her circumstances. This introspection leads her to doubt her own character, as she considers whether her actions are influenced by her sister's illness or reflect her inherent nature. The narrative captures Anna's existential crisis and her desire to break free from the labels imposed by her family's situation.

The chapter then follows Anna as she joins her brother Jesse in his car, where their banter reveals their complex relationship. Jesse's nonchalant attitude contrasts with Anna's tension, as she attempts to smoke a cigarette for the first time, a moment that blends humor and vulnerability. Their interaction highlights Jesse's role as both a protector and a provocateur, while Anna's failed attempt at smoking symbolizes her struggle to assert her independence. The scene ends with Jesse driving Anna to the hospital, where she hopes to see Kate but fears her mother's interference.

In the final section, Anna recalls a childhood memory of practicing headstands with Kate, a bittersweet moment that underscores their bond. The memory contrasts with the present reality of Kate's illness and Anna's conflicted emotions about her role in

her sister's life. Jesse's reassurance that Anna isn't "doing the wrong thing" hints at the moral ambiguity of her decisions. The chapter closes with Anna's unresolved tension, as she grapples with love, guilt, and the desire for autonomy in the shadow of her sister's suffering.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna reflecting on her family's photo collection, which serves as a visual timeline of their lives. She notes the disparity in the number of photos of herself compared to her siblings, Jesse and Kate, hinting at her perceived invisibility within the family. The photos evoke bittersweet emotions, symbolizing moments of happiness and importance, yet also highlighting the gaps in her own documented childhood. This introspection sets the tone for Anna's feelings of isolation and unresolved familial dynamics.

Anna's father calls to check on her while her mother stays at the hospital with Kate, who is heavily medicated. Their conversation is brief and strained, underscoring the family's preoccupation with Kate's illness. Anna imagines her father's life as a firefighter, a metaphor for the constant crises he manages, both professionally and personally. This moment propels her to leave the house, seeking solace or distraction, further emphasizing her emotional turmoil and desire for autonomy.

The narrative shifts to Anna's musings on how her identity is shaped by her sister's illness. She compares herself to a classmate who gained sympathy after being diagnosed with a disease, questioning whether people treat her kindly out of genuine regard or pity. This leads her to doubt her own character, wondering if her actions are inherently flawed or merely a product of her circumstances. Her existential questioning reveals deep-seated insecurities and a longing for normalcy.

The chapter concludes with Anna and her brother Jesse in a car, where she attempts to smoke a cigarette for the first time, a rebellious act that ends in comedic failure. Their banter masks deeper tensions, as Anna grapples with her decision to visit Kate at the hospital. Jesse's cryptic advice about the "dragon guarding the cave" hints at their mother's protective presence, complicating Anna's desire to see her sister. The siblings' interaction blends humor and poignancy, capturing Anna's internal conflict

and the complex bond they share.

THURSDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a gripping account of firefighter Brian Fitzgerald responding to an emergency call in the middle of the night. Within minutes, his team is en route to a house fire on Hoddington Drive, where they confront a blazing structure resembling a "dragon's mouth." A distraught mother reveals her three-year-old daughter is trapped inside, prompting Brian to coordinate his team—ventilating the roof, charging hoses, and preparing to enter the inferno. The urgency and danger of the situation are palpable as Brian weighs the risks of rescue against firefighter safety protocols.

Amid the chaos, the narrative shifts to Brian's reflections on his life as a firefighter. He admits to feeling more at ease in the firehouse than at home, where anxiety about potential emergencies lingers. A touching memory of his daughter Kate's childhood drawing—depicting him as a firefighter with a halo—highlights his dual role as a hero and a vulnerable human. The chapter juxtaposes the adrenaline of firefighting with the quiet moments of camaraderie, such as cooking breakfast for his team, revealing the emotional complexity beneath his stoic exterior.

The tone shifts again when Julia Romano, a guardian ad litem for a case involving Brian's family, unexpectedly arrives at the firehouse. Their conversation hints at deeper familial struggles, including Kate's illness and Jesse's substance abuse. Brian's distraction while cooking—burning a pancake—mirrors his overwhelming personal battles. Julia's presence and her unconventional cooking additions (like horseradish in eggs) introduce a moment of levity, yet the underlying tension remains as Brian grapples with his role as a protector both on and off duty.

The chapter circles back to the fire rescue, detailing Brian's desperate search for the missing child. Crawling through smoke-filled halls, he checks every corner but finds only an empty room and a stuffed animal. The unresolved rescue lingers as a metaphor for his life—fighting relentless fires, both literal and figurative, while

struggling to hold his family together. The chapter masterfully blends action, introspection, and emotional stakes, painting a vivid portrait of a man balancing duty, danger, and personal turmoil.

THURSDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with firefighter Brian Fitzgerald responding to an emergency call in the middle of the night. The urgency of the situation is palpable as he and his team swiftly prepare and rush to a house engulfed in flames on Hoddington Drive. Upon arrival, they face a chaotic scene: a distraught mother screams for her three-year-old daughter trapped inside. Brian takes charge, directing his team to vent the roof and attack the fire while he prepares to enter the burning building. The narrative captures the high-stakes tension of firefighting, where split-second decisions can mean life or death.

Brian reflects on the inherent risks of his job, acknowledging that firefighters must prioritize their own safety even when attempting rescues. He contrasts the controlled chaos of the firehouse with the unpredictable anxieties of home life, revealing a personal vulnerability beneath his professional bravery. A touching memory of his daughter Kate, who once drew him as a firefighter with a halo, underscores his dual role as both hero and human. The chapter then shifts to the morning after the fire, where Brian cooks breakfast for his team, only to be interrupted by Julia Romano, a guardian ad litem assigned to his daughter Anna’s case.

Julia’s unexpected arrival introduces a new layer of tension, as she seeks to discuss Anna’s legal situation. Their interaction is punctuated by Brian’s distractedness, which leads to a burnt pancake—a metaphor for his overwhelmed state. Julia’s calm demeanor and willingness to help in the kitchen create a momentary respite, but Brian’s thoughts quickly return to his family’s struggles: Kate’s illness, Anna’s legal battle, and Jesse’s substance abuse. The chapter paints a vivid picture of a man grappling with personal and professional fires on multiple fronts.

The narrative circles back to the fire rescue, detailing Brian’s desperate search for the missing child amidst the smoke and chaos. Despite his efforts, the child is nowhere to

be found, leaving the outcome unresolved. The chapter closes with Brian nearly tripping over a hose, symbolizing the precarious balance he maintains between duty and family. The prose blends action with introspection, offering a raw and honest portrayal of a firefighter’s life—both the adrenaline-fueled rescues and the quiet, lingering battles at home.

THURSDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia encountering Brian Fitzgerald, whose car is filled with astronomical charts and star maps, revealing his passion for astronomy. Their conversation shifts to childhood memories of stars, blending whimsical and scientific perspectives—Julia recalls her mother's angelic explanation for starlight, while Brian humorously contrasts it with his attempts to teach his kids about atomic fusion. Their exchange highlights the interplay between wonder and logic, as Brian explains how dark matter, though invisible, exerts a gravitational pull on the universe. This metaphorical tension between the seen and unseen subtly mirrors Julia's emotional struggles.

Later, the narrative shifts to Julia's confrontation with her sister, Izzy, who criticizes her unresolved feelings for Campbell Alexander, a man from her past. Izzy's blunt assessment—comparing Julia to a moth drawn to a zapper—sparks a heated exchange, exposing Julia's defensiveness and lingering attachment. The sisters' argument reveals Julia's internal conflict: she resents Campbell's impact on her life but refuses to let it dictate her professional choices. Izzy's accusation that Julia spends her life chasing emotionally unavailable men adds depth to Julia's characterization as someone torn between pride and vulnerability.

Seeking escape, Julia heads to a bar, only to discover it's a gay establishment, compounding her sense of isolation. Her attempt to drown her sorrows in tequila leads to a candid conversation with the bartender, Seven, whose nonchalant demeanor contrasts with Julia's emotional turmoil. As she drinks, Julia's facade cracks, and she tearfully recalls Campbell's pet name for her, "Jewel," a metaphor for the potential he once saw in her. The bartender's indifference underscores her loneliness, while her drunken musings about reinventing herself ("Maybe I should be Six") hint at a desire to shed her past.

The chapter closes with Julia’s raw vulnerability as she confronts the pain of Campbell’s abandonment. Her reflection on jewels—formed under pressure but often overlooked—mirrors her own feelings of being discarded. The bartender’s deflection (“I used to have a real job”) adds a layer of dark humor, but Julia’s tears reveal the depth of her unresolved heartache. The chapter masterfully intertwines cosmic metaphors with personal grief, painting Julia as a woman grappling with the invisible forces—both gravitational and emotional—that shape her life.

THURSDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia encountering Brian Fitzgerald, whose car is filled with astronomical charts and star maps, revealing his passion for astronomy. Their conversation shifts to childhood memories of stars, blending whimsical and scientific perspectives—Julia recalls her mother's angelic explanation for starlight, while Brian humorously contrasts this with his attempts to teach his kids about atomic fusion. Their exchange highlights the interplay between wonder and logic, culminating in Brian's explanation of dark matter as an invisible yet gravitational force, mirroring the chapter's themes of unseen emotional undercurrents.

Julia's internal conflict takes center stage as she recalls a tense interaction with her sister, Izzy, who criticizes her unresolved feelings for Campbell Alexander. Izzy bluntly compares Julia's attraction to Campbell to a moth drawn to a fatal light, accusing her of repeating self-destructive patterns. Julia deflects with sarcasm but is visibly shaken, leading her to storm out to a bar. The dialogue exposes Julia's defensiveness and hints at a deep-seated vulnerability tied to Campbell, setting up her emotional unraveling.

At Shakespeare's Cat, a gay bar, Julia's attempt to distract herself backfires when she realizes the futility of her escapism. Her witty banter with the bartender, Seven, masks her loneliness, and tequila-fueled confessions reveal her lingering pain over Campbell's abandonment. The nickname "Jewel" resurfaces, symbolizing how Campbell once saw her potential but ultimately discarded her. The bar scene underscores Julia's struggle to reconcile her pride with her heartbreak, culminating in drunken tears.

The chapter closes with Julia and Seven bonding over their shared sense of lost identity—Julia's dyed hair and Seven's career shift serving as metaphors for reinvention. Yet Julia's sarcasm and self-deprecation thinly veil her unresolved trauma. The juxtaposition of cosmic metaphors (stars, dark matter) with raw human emotion (betrayal, longing) ties the narrative together, painting Julia as a woman caught

between intellectual detachment and emotional chaos. Her journey remains unresolved, leaving readers anticipating her next move.

THURSDAY SARA

The chapter opens with a tender yet tense scene as Kate, an eight-year-old girl in remission from a serious illness, prepares for her birthday party. Her mother observes her changing outfits, noting her childlike indecision and a concerning bruise on her thigh. The mother's anxiety is palpable as she recalls Kate's five years of remission, where every minor complaint or injury triggered fears of relapse. The birthday party unfolds with joy—Kate receives a goldfish named Hercules, a symbol of normalcy and happiness—but the mother's unease lingers, foreshadowing the impending crisis.

The narrative shifts abruptly when routine medical tests reveal Kate's molecular relapse, marked by abnormal promyelocytes and chromosomal translocations. The doctors explain the inevitability of clinical symptoms returning and propose treatment with ATRA, a targeted therapy derived from ancient Chinese medicine. The clinical discussion contrasts starkly with the earlier domestic scene, emphasizing the fragility of Kate's health. The mother grapples with the devastating news, struggling to reconcile the celebration of life with the looming threat of illness.

The emotional toll on the family becomes evident as Jesse, Kate's brother, confronts his mother about forgotten promises, highlighting the tension between normalcy and crisis. The mother's outburst reveals her overwhelming fear and guilt, while Jesse's resentment underscores the unequal attention given to Kate's needs. This confrontation culminates in a moment of raw vulnerability, where the mother recognizes her own flaws and the impossibility of balancing her children's competing demands amidst a medical emergency.

In the final scene, the mother attempts to mend the rift with Jesse, acknowledging her mistake and the need for compassion. The chapter closes with a poignant reflection on life's unpredictability, as the mother knocks on Jesse's door, seeking reconciliation. The juxtaposition of Kate's playful innocence outside with the strained family dynamics

inside underscores the central theme: how illness disrupts and redefines relationships, forcing loved ones to navigate grief, guilt, and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

THURSDAY SARA

The chapter opens with a tender yet tense scene as Kate, an energetic eight-year-old, prepares for her birthday party while struggling to choose an outfit. Her mother notices a bruise on Kate's thigh, triggering memories of Kate's past health struggles. Though Kate has been in remission for five years after a cord blood transplant, her mother remains hypervigilant, often interpreting minor injuries as potential signs of relapse. The birthday party proceeds with joy—Kate receives a goldfish named Hercules—but the bruise lingers in her mother's mind, foreshadowing impending turmoil.

A routine medical test reveals that Kate's leukemia has returned at a molecular level, with abnormal chromosome translocations. The doctor explains that while clinical symptoms may not appear immediately, relapse is inevitable. The family is thrust back into the world of medical uncertainty, where terms like "relapse" are delivered with chilling matter-of-factness. The doctor proposes ATRA therapy, a targeted treatment that could potentially restore remission, but its success is not guaranteed. The mother grapples with the crushing reality of Kate's illness, feeling paralyzed by the weight of the diagnosis.

The emotional strain spills over into the family dynamics when Jesse, Kate's brother, insists on keeping a promise to buy new soccer cleats. Overwhelmed, the mother snaps at him, accusing him of selfishness, while Jesse retaliates by pointing out the family's constant focus on Kate. Their confrontation highlights the unequal distribution of attention in families dealing with chronic illness. The mother momentarily understands how frustration could lead to physical anger, though she refrains from acting on it. Jesse's hurt reaction underscores the collateral damage of Kate's illness on sibling relationships.

In a moment of reflection, the mother acknowledges life's unpredictability and the absence of guarantees. She attempts to reconcile with Jesse, recognizing her

harshness. The chapter ends with an unresolved tension, mirroring the family's precarious emotional state. The mother's apology marks a small step toward balance, but the underlying fear of Kate's condition looms large, leaving the family's future uncertain.

THURSDAY ANNA

The chapter delves into Anna's emotional turmoil as she grapples with the impending loss of her sister, Kate. Influenced by infomercials and Tony Robbins' teachings, Anna attempts to mentally prepare for Kate's death by imagining life without her. This exercise proves agonizing, as she oscillates between grief-fueled despair and fleeting moments of hope about future possibilities like studying oceanography or skydiving. However, these fantasies feel ill-fitting, as Anna struggles to envision an identity separate from her sister, fearing she won't recognize herself without Kate in her life.

A tense hospital cafeteria scene reveals the family's fractured dynamics. Anna's mother organizes sugar packets with mechanical precision, symbolizing their emotional distance. The conversation takes a sharp turn when Anna misunderstands her mother's suggestion to "stop"—thinking it refers to ending medical donations, while her mother only meant dropping the lawsuit. This miscommunication escalates into a heated argument, highlighting the family's inability to truly hear one another. The confrontation intensifies when a deputy delivers legal papers, revealing Anna has unknowingly been implicated in a restraining order against her mother.

The chapter flashes back to a pivotal moment three months earlier, showcasing Anna and Kate's complex sibling relationship. Anna steals Kate's makeup for a date with Kyle, a boy who sees her as separate from her family's struggles. When Kate discovers the theft, their confrontation evolves into playful wrestling, revealing the deep bond beneath their conflicts. This memory contrasts sharply with their current reality, where Kate's illness has strained their connection and Anna's autonomy.

Throughout the chapter, Anna's narrative voice captures her internal conflict—yearning for independence yet tethered to her sister's needs. The legal drama intertwines with family tensions, as Anna's attempt to assert control over her body clashes with her parents' expectations. The chapter masterfully portrays the

contradictions of grief: the push-pull of wanting to escape while fearing what freedom might reveal, and the struggle to be seen as an individual within a family defined by crisis.

THURSDAY ANNA

The chapter delves into Anna's emotional turmoil as she grapples with the impending loss of her sister, Kate. Influenced by infomercials and self-help gurus, Anna attempts to mentally prepare for Kate's death by imagining life without her, a process that oscillates between grief and fleeting fantasies of freedom. She describes the difficulty of maintaining this emotional distance while Kate is still alive, often retreating into sadness or mundane routines to avoid confronting her feelings. Anna's internal censor prevents her from fully exploring these thoughts, as she fears disliking the person she might become without Kate in her life.

A tense hospital cafeteria scene reveals the strained dynamics between Anna and her parents. Anna's mother organizes sugar packets with precision, symbolizing her need for control amid chaos. The conversation shifts to Anna's desire to stop being Kate's donor, which her mother misinterprets as ending the lawsuit rather than halting medical donations. This miscommunication escalates into a confrontation, highlighting the family's fractured communication. The arrival of a deputy with a restraining order further complicates matters, leaving Anna confused and her mother outraged, as legal actions are taken without Anna's full understanding.

A flashback to three months earlier provides context for Anna's relationship with Kate. Anna steals Kate's makeup to impress a boy named Kyle, leading to a physical altercation that quickly turns playful. This moment captures the sisters' complex bond—marked by rivalry, affection, and shared secrets. Kate's teasing about the makeup reveals her perceptiveness, while their wrestling match underscores the deep, albeit contentious, connection between them. The memory contrasts sharply with the present tension, emphasizing how illness has strained their relationship.

The chapter concludes with Anna's unresolved conflict with her mother and the looming legal battle. The restraining order incident leaves Anna feeling powerless, as

her attempts to assert autonomy are overshadowed by misunderstandings and legal maneuvering. The juxtaposition of past camaraderie with present strife underscores the emotional weight of Kate's illness on the family. Anna's struggle to define herself outside of her sister's needs remains central, leaving readers with a sense of her isolation and the painful choices ahead.

THURSDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with attorney Campbell Alexander arriving at family court, where he eagerly engages with reporters, framing the case as nationally significant while subtly promoting his own image. Inside, he exchanges a knowing glance with Deputy Vern Stackhouse, having previously hinted about the hearing's importance to Stackhouse's reporter sister. The narrative highlights Campbell's self-serving approach to pro bono work, suggesting he thrives on media attention and strategic manipulation to advance his agenda.

In chambers, Campbell argues for a restraining order against Sara Fitzgerald, claiming she violated the judge's order by discussing the lawsuit with her daughter Anna. Sara admits to the conversation, defending her actions as a concerned mother. The guardian ad litem, Julia Romano, expresses concern about Anna's confusion and opposes the restraining order, emphasizing the emotional toll of separating mother and daughter. Judge DeSalvo denies the motion but sternly warns Sara against further violations, threatening to report her to the bar if she disobeys.

The tension escalates as Campbell, Sara, and Julia discover Anna and her father have left the courthouse. Sara, avoiding the press, seeks an alternate exit with Julia's help. Meanwhile, Campbell attempts to evade Julia, who confronts him about misleading Anna. Julia criticizes Campbell for treating Anna like an adult client, arguing that the 13-year-old lacks the emotional maturity to fully grasp the consequences of legal separation from her mother. Campbell reveals Anna has changed her mind about the petition, but Julia insists he manipulated her by focusing only on the legal benefits without addressing the familial fallout.

The chapter concludes with Campbell hurriedly leaving, his service dog Judge signaling his stress. Julia's frustration underscores the ethical dilemma of the case: balancing legal strategy with the emotional well-being of a child caught in a high-stakes family

conflict. The exchange leaves unresolved questions about Campbell's motives and Anna's true desires, setting the stage for further legal and personal drama.

THURSDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with attorney Campbell Alexander arriving at family court, where he eagerly engages with reporters, framing his case as nationally significant while subtly promoting himself. He hints at broader implications for minors' rights and stem cell research, showcasing his flair for drama and self-promotion. Inside the courtroom, he exchanges a knowing glance with Deputy Vern Stackhouse, having earlier planted a tip to attract media attention. The narrative highlights Campbell's calculated manipulation of the situation, even as he acknowledges the moral ambiguity of leveraging pro bono work for personal gain.

In chambers, Campbell clashes with Judge DeSalvo over a restraining order motion against Sara Fitzgerald, Anna's mother, for violating a court order by discussing the case with her daughter. Campbell argues that Sara's dual role as parent and opposing counsel necessitates physical separation to protect Anna. Sara defiantly admits to speaking with Anna, insisting she was trying to resolve the conflict. The tension escalates when Julia Romano, the guardian ad litem, arrives and expresses skepticism about removing Sara from the home, emphasizing Anna's confusion and emotional vulnerability.

Judge DeSalvo denies the restraining order but sternly warns Sara against further violations, threatening to report her to the bar and evict her from the home if she disobeys. Campbell, undeterred, rushes to meet Anna, only to discover she and her father have left. Sara, equally surprised, seeks an escape from the media frenzy. Julia confronts Campbell, accusing him of misrepresenting Anna's wishes and failing to consider the emotional toll of separating a child from her mother. She argues that Anna, as a 13-year-old, lacks the maturity to fully grasp the consequences of her legal decisions.

The chapter concludes with a heated exchange between Campbell and Julia, revealing Anna's change of heart about the petition. Julia criticizes Campbell for focusing solely on legal tactics while ignoring Anna's emotional needs. Campbell, distracted by his dog's antics, dismisses Julia's concerns and departs abruptly, leaving the conflict unresolved. The scene underscores the ethical tensions between legal strategy and familial bonds, as well as Campbell's self-serving approach to the case.

THURSDAY JESSE

The chapter opens with Jesse returning home to find Julia Romano, a striking older woman, waiting for him. Initially flirtatious, Jesse’s demeanor shifts when Julia reveals she’s a guardian ad litem working on a case involving his sister, Anna, who is suing their parents for medical emancipation. Jesse’s playful banter contrasts with Julia’s professional tone, highlighting his irreverent attitude and her no-nonsense approach. Despite his attempts to charm her, Julia remains focused on her mission, setting the stage for a tense yet revealing conversation about Jesse’s family dynamics.

As Julia enters Jesse’s messy apartment, the chaotic environment mirrors his disorganized life. Their exchange reveals Jesse’s detachment from his family’s struggles, particularly Anna’s lawsuit. When Julia probes about his relationship with his sisters, Jesse deflects with sarcasm before unexpectedly sharing a poignant childhood memory. He recounts a Christmas Eve when Kate’s illness disrupted family plans, leaving him feeling neglected and unimportant. This anecdote underscores Jesse’s longstanding sense of invisibility within his family, overshadowed by Kate’s medical needs.

Jesse’s story about the Christmas tree and the thoughtless gifts from the hospital gift shop illustrates his parents’ preoccupation with Kate at his expense. His bitterness surfaces as he describes how his efforts to create a normal holiday were ignored. This memory serves as a metaphor for his role in the family—unseen and unappreciated. Julia’s questions about Anna’s experience prompt Jesse to contrast his neglect with Anna’s centrality to Kate’s survival, revealing the unequal dynamics that define their family.

The chapter concludes with Jesse reflecting on another childhood memory: digging a hole to China, only to find himself trapped and lost. This metaphor mirrors his feelings of isolation and directionlessness within his family. Jesse’s narrative reveals a deep-

seated resentment and a longing for recognition, painting a picture of a young man who copes with neglect through humor and detachment. Julia’s presence forces him to confront these emotions, hinting at deeper tensions yet to be explored in the story.

THURSDAY JESSE

The chapter opens with Jesse Fitzgerald returning home to find Julia Romano, a striking older woman, waiting on his doorstep. Their flirtatious banter reveals Julia is a guardian ad litem investigating Anna Fitzgerald's lawsuit for medical emancipation from their parents. Jesse's playful attempts to charm Julia—despite her professional demeanor—highlight his carefree, rebellious nature. The tension between his lighthearted advances and Julia's no-nonsense attitude sets the stage for a deeper conversation about his family dynamics.

As Julia enters Jesse's messy apartment, the contrast between his chaotic lifestyle and her composed professionalism becomes evident. Their discussion shifts to Anna's legal case, with Jesse initially deflecting questions with sarcasm. However, when pressed about his relationship with his sisters, Jesse reveals a rare moment of vulnerability, recounting a childhood memory of a neglected Christmas overshadowed by Kate's medical needs. This anecdote underscores his feelings of invisibility within the family.

Jesse's story about the Christmas tree and the hospital gift shop presents symbolizes his family's prioritization of Kate's health over his emotional needs. He explains how Anna, unlike him, remains "on their radar" because of her role in Kate's treatment. His bitterness surfaces as he describes the lack of choice in their family's medical decisions, implying Anna is similarly trapped in a system where Kate's survival takes precedence over individual autonomy.

The chapter concludes with Jesse reflecting on a childhood attempt to dig a tunnel to China, a metaphor for his futile efforts to find belonging or purpose. The imagery of getting lost in the dark tunnel mirrors his sense of isolation and directionlessness. This introspective moment contrasts sharply with his earlier bravado, revealing the depth of his unresolved family trauma and his struggle to navigate life outside Kate's overwhelming shadow.

THURSDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with Anna quickly settling into her father's room at the fire station, while he faces questions from his colleagues about her sudden presence. The firefighters, including Paulie, Caesar, and Red, express concern and solidarity, though the protagonist internally acknowledges that he and his wife, Sara, are the ones causing Anna's distress. The father-daughter dynamic is awkward yet tender, as he tries to connect with Anna through playful suggestions like card games and hair braiding, revealing his discomfort in navigating her teenage world. Their banter about tampons in the shared bathroom highlights both their vulnerability and his protective instincts.

A reflective moment follows, as the protagonist recalls Anna's childhood and laments how quickly she has outgrown her younger self. The metaphor of goldfish and bonsai trees underscores his longing to preserve her innocence. The narrative shifts to the family's broader struggles: while one daughter, Kate, battles end-stage renal failure, Anna's recent actions have thrown the family into turmoil. The father marvels at human resilience, comparing it to bamboo's flexibility, as he balances both crises. This introspection contrasts with the earlier lighthearted exchange, emphasizing the weight of his responsibilities.

The protagonist visits Kate in the hospital, where Sara updates him on her condition. Their conversation turns tense when he reveals Anna will stay with him at the station, sparking a marital disagreement. Sara accuses him of indulging Anna's rebellion, while he defends his decision as giving her space. A fleeting moment of connection occurs when he glimpses Sara's former self, kissing her forehead before leaving. This scene underscores the strain on their relationship, as differing approaches to parenting and crisis management drive a wedge between them.

The chapter concludes with an emergency call to a nursing home, where Anna insists on joining the crew despite the late hour. Equipped with borrowed gear, she accompanies her father and the team, demonstrating her determination to be part of his world. The scene shifts focus to their shared commitment amid chaos, offering a glimpse of how their bond might strengthen through adversity. The unresolved tension with Sara lingers, but the protagonist's focus remains on protecting Anna, even as he grapples with the complexities of fatherhood and marriage.

THURSDAY BRIAN

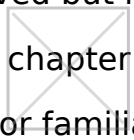
The chapter opens with Anna quickly moving into her father's room at the fire station, where the firefighters—Paulie, Caesar, and Red—welcome her with curiosity and protective concern. The narrator, Anna's father, deflects their questions about her sudden arrival, hinting at unresolved family issues. The firefighters' camaraderie and willingness to stand by Anna highlight the station's supportive environment, though the father privately acknowledges that he and his wife, Sara, are the source of Anna's distress. The scene sets the stage for the father's attempt to bridge the gap with his teenage daughter in an unfamiliar setting.

Back in their shared room, the father struggles to connect with Anna, awkwardly suggesting activities like card games or hair braiding, which she finds amusingly out of touch. Their banter reveals both their discomfort and underlying affection. A moment of tension arises when Anna asks about leaving tampons in the shared bathroom, exposing the gendered dynamics of the firehouse. The father's humorous yet earnest response—offering to claim them as his own—lightens the mood, showcasing his effort to make her feel at ease. Their exchange ends with a warm hug, hinting at the possibility of reconciliation despite the strained circumstances.

The narrative shifts to the father's reflections on Anna's growth and the family's broader struggles. A poignant memory of carrying Anna as a child contrasts with her current independence, symbolizing the bittersweet passage of time. The father grapples with the dual crises facing his daughters: Kate's terminal illness and Anna's emotional turmoil. The metaphor of bamboo's flexibility underscores his resilience in juggling these burdens. A flashback to the hospital reveals tensions with Sara, who disapproves of his decision to let Anna stay at the station. Their argument exposes differing parenting approaches, culminating in a tender moment where the father glimpses Sara's former self before walking away, emphasizing the fractures in their

marriage.

The chapter concludes with Anna joining the firefighters on an emergency call to a nursing home, symbolizing her tentative steps into her father's world. Her readiness to participate contrasts with his initial hesitation, suggesting her adaptability and curiosity. The scene ends abruptly as they attend to an elderly patient, leaving the outcome unresolved but reinforcing the theme of navigating crises—both personal and professional. The chapter captures the father's internal conflict, Anna's resilience, and the fragile hope for familial healing amid adversity.



FRIDAY CAMPBELL

Campbell Alexander arrives at Providence Hospital with his service dog, Judge, only to be confronted by a hostile security officer who denies them entry. Despite claiming Judge is CPR-certified for his irregular heartbeat, Campbell faces resistance. He seeks out Dr. Peter Bergen, chairman of the medical ethics board, to obtain Anna Fitzgerald's medical records, but Bergen insists the ethics committee has only reviewed Kate Fitzgerald's case. Campbell presses the issue, highlighting Anna's numerous hospital visits, but Bergen dismisses the relevance, emphasizing the committee only intervenes in conflicts between physicians and patients.

The chapter shifts to a flashback where Campbell recalls a heated argument with Julia Romano, his former lover, about the Virgin Mary. Their disagreement escalates when Campbell's locker spills condoms, revealing his reputation among peers. Julia, hurt by his lack of defense for their relationship, storms off. This memory contrasts sharply with their present encounter in the hospital elevator, where they exchange tense words. Julia, now a guardian ad litem for Anna, reveals the Fitzgerald family has gone silent, leaving the status of their lawsuit uncertain.

Campbell attempts to bridge the awkwardness with Julia, suggesting they collaborate to prepare for the upcoming hearing. Julia resists, but Campbell appeals to her sense of duty, arguing Anna's future should outweigh their personal history. Their banter reveals lingering tension, with Julia mocking Campbell's smooth-talking demeanor. Despite her sharp retorts, she reluctantly acknowledges the need to focus on Anna's case, hinting at unresolved feelings between them.

The chapter underscores Campbell's determination to advocate for Anna, even as he navigates bureaucratic hurdles and personal conflicts. His interactions with Bergen and Julia highlight the complexities of medical ethics and the emotional baggage complicating his professional responsibilities. The narrative weaves past and present,

revealing Campbell's vulnerabilities and the stakes of the legal battle ahead. The unresolved tension with Julia adds depth to his character, suggesting personal growth may be as critical as the case itself.

FRIDAY CAMPBELL

Campbell Alexander arrives at Providence Hospital with his service dog, Judge, only to be confronted by a hostile security officer who denies them entry. Despite claiming Judge is CPR-certified for his irregular heartbeat, Campbell faces resistance. He seeks out Dr. Peter Bergen, chairman of the medical ethics board, to obtain Anna Fitzgerald's medical records, but Bergen insists the ethics committee has only reviewed her sister Kate's case. Campbell presses the issue, highlighting Anna's numerous hospital visits, but Bergen dismisses the relevance, arguing the committee only intervenes in conflicts between patients and physicians.

The chapter shifts to a flashback where Campbell recalls a heated argument with Julia Romano, his former lover, about the Virgin Mary. Their disagreement escalates when Campbell's locker spills condoms, embarrassing Julia and causing her to flee. The memory underscores their strained relationship, marked by miscommunication and unresolved tension. This past conflict contrasts with their present encounter in the hospital elevator, where they awkwardly reunite while discussing the Fitzgerald case. Julia reveals she’s been unable to contact Anna’s family, mirroring Campbell’s frustrations.

Campbell and Julia’s interaction is fraught with sarcasm and unresolved emotions. He suggests they collaborate to prepare for Anna’s upcoming hearing, but Julia initially resists. Campbell appeals to her professionalism, emphasizing Anna’s need for representation despite their personal history. Julia’s sharp retorts and Campbell’s witty comebacks reveal their lingering chemistry and animosity. Their dialogue oscillates between hostility and reluctant cooperation, reflecting the complexity of their past relationship.

The chapter concludes with Campbell and Julia at an impasse, their professional duties colliding with personal baggage. Campbell’s determination to advocate for Anna

contrasts with Julia’s guarded demeanor, yet both seem aware of the stakes. The unresolved tension between them hints at future collaboration or confrontation, while the Fitzgerald case remains uncertain. The chapter captures Campbell’s tenacity, Julia’s resilience, and the ethical ambiguities surrounding Anna’s medical history, setting the stage for further conflict and resolution.

FRIDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a reflection on the Greek myth of Prometheus, who defied Zeus to give fire to humanity, symbolizing hope amidst suffering. Despite being punished, Prometheus's act left humans with hope as their only weapon against life's miseries. This allegory sets the tone for the chapter, connecting firefighting—a profession built on hope—to the personal struggles of Brian Fitzgerald, a firefighter grappling with family turmoil. The narrative shifts to Brian's conversation with lawyer Campbell Alexander, revealing his support for his daughter Anna's legal stance, which opposes his wife Sara's position, creating familial tension.

Brian's internal conflict is further explored through a flashback to an emergency call involving a heroin overdose. His intense reaction to the teenage boy's negligence reflects his own emotional turmoil, as he battles the parallel crises of his daughter Kate's hospitalization and Anna's legal case. The scene highlights Brian's dedication to saving lives while struggling with his personal demons. His colleague Paulie's concern underscores the weight of Brian's dual roles as a first responder and a father in crisis, emphasizing his need to stay busy to avoid collapsing under the pressure.

The conversation with Alexander resumes, revealing Brian's resolve to testify in Anna's favor, despite the strain it will place on his marriage. The lawyer's revelation about Brian's son's legal troubles adds another layer of complexity to the family's struggles. Brian's quiet acceptance of this news foreshadows further emotional breakdowns, as he realizes the cumulative weight of his children's crises. The chapter paints a poignant picture of a man trying to hold his family together while confronting impossible choices.

Ultimately, the chapter weaves together themes of hope, sacrifice, and familial duty. Brian's professional life as a firefighter mirrors his personal battles—both require him to confront chaos and despair while clinging to hope. The juxtaposition of myth and

reality underscores the universal human struggle to find light in darkness. Brian's story becomes a modern-day Promethean tale, where love and duty collide, leaving him to bear the consequences of his choices, much like the titan who dared to defy the gods for humanity's sake.

FRIDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a reflection on the Greek myth of Prometheus, who defied Zeus to give fire—and by extension, hope—to humanity. This act of rebellion led to Pandora's box, releasing plagues and misery, with hope remaining as the only weapon against them. The narrative then shifts to Brian Fitzgerald, a firefighter, who meets with Campbell Alexander, a lawyer accompanied by his German shepherd. Their conversation revolves around Brian's daughter Anna and the legal complexities arising from his wife Sara's dual role as opposing counsel and family representative. Brian hints at his alignment with Anna's stance, setting the stage for a potential conflict.

Brian reveals his strained family dynamics, particularly the hospitalization of his older daughter Kate and the emotional toll it has taken. He expresses his desire to speak to Alexander without Sara present, indicating his support for Anna's position. The lawyer probes Brian's willingness to testify in court, to which Brian reluctantly agrees, acknowledging the gravity of the situation. This moment underscores the tension between personal convictions and familial loyalty, as Brian grapples with the consequences of his decision.

The narrative then flashes back to a harrowing emergency call Brian responded to earlier, involving a teenage girl overdosing on drugs. Brian's frustration with the girl's boyfriend escalates into a confrontation, revealing his own pent-up emotions and stress. His colleague Paulie intervenes, reminding Brian to stay composed. The incident mirrors Brian's personal struggles, as he admits that work provides a temporary escape from his family's turmoil. This parallel highlights the theme of coping mechanisms and the weight of responsibility.

The chapter concludes with Brian and Alexander wrapping up their conversation, the lawyer hinting at another family crisis involving Brian's son. The revelation leaves Brian emotionally drained, foreshadowing further challenges. The interplay of myth

and reality throughout the chapter underscores the enduring power of hope amid adversity, while Brian's personal and professional conflicts illustrate the complexities of human resilience and familial bonds.

FRIDAY SARA

The chapter opens with a harrowing scene as Brian and the narrator rush their daughter Sara to the emergency room after a bike accident. Sara sustains a significant scalp laceration, requiring eighty-two stitches. The parents' calm demeanor hints at their familiarity with medical crises, a theme that recurs throughout the chapter. The family's dynamics are briefly highlighted as Sara's siblings react to her injury, with one remarking on the relative comfort of waiting in the hospital lobby, foreshadowing the family's frequent encounters with medical emergencies.

The narrative shifts to another critical health crisis involving Kate, the narrator's nine-year-old daughter, who experiences severe rectal bleeding—a symptom of her relapsed acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL). The mother's internal monologue reveals her anguish as she tends to Kate, questioning whether her daughter will live long enough to experience milestones like menstruation. Dr. Chance, their physician, delivers the grim news that a bone marrow transplant is now necessary, despite its high risks, as Kate's survival without it is impossible.

The family's struggle extends to their insurance company, which initially denies coverage for the life-saving transplant. The narrator's frustration mounts as she navigates bureaucratic hurdles, disconnected calls, and dismissive representatives who prioritize cost over her daughter's life. A tense exchange with a supervisor reveals the insurance company's unwillingness to fully cover the transplant, offering only partial funding for a less effective treatment. The narrator's impassioned argument underscores the inhumanity of valuing profit over a child's survival.

The chapter concludes with the painful preparation for Anna, another daughter, to donate bone marrow for Kate's transplant. Anna's fear and resentment during the growth factor shots highlight the emotional toll on the family. The narrator's confrontation with the insurance company escalates, culminating in her outburst about

the moral failure of prioritizing protocols over human life. The chapter paints a vivid picture of a family grappling with medical, emotional, and systemic battles in their fight to save Kate.

FRIDAY SARA

The chapter opens with a harrowing scene as Brian and the narrator rush their daughter Sara to the emergency room after a bike accident. Sara sustains a head injury requiring 82 stitches, but the family’s resilience shines through as they comfort her with humor and praise. This moment of crisis contrasts sharply with the underlying tension of Kate’s recurring health struggles, foreshadowing the deeper medical ordeal to come. The narrator’s calm demeanor hints at their familiarity with emergencies, setting the stage for the family’s ongoing battle with illness.

Kate’s sudden rectal bleeding marks a devastating relapse of her leukemia (APL), forcing the family to confront the grim reality of her condition. The narrator grapples with the emotional weight of caring for a critically ill child, even as they perform mundane tasks like cleaning Kate up and reassuring her. Dr. Chance delivers the brutal prognosis: a bone marrow transplant offers a 50% chance of survival, but without it, Kate will die. The family is torn between the risks of the procedure and the inevitability of her decline, highlighting the impossible choices faced by parents of terminally ill children.

The narrative shifts to the bureaucratic nightmare of securing insurance coverage for the transplant. The narrator’s frustration mounts as they navigate endless hold times, disconnections, and ultimately, the insurer’s refusal to approve the procedure. The insurance company’s cold logic—prioritizing cost over life—clashes with the narrator’s desperate advocacy for Kate. Their heated exchange exposes the systemic barriers families face when seeking life-saving care, underscoring the dehumanizing nature of healthcare bureaucracy.

In the final section, Anna becomes central to Kate’s treatment plan as a marrow donor, enduring painful growth factor shots. The narrator’s guilt and anguish are palpable as Anna, confused and resentful, lashes out. The chapter closes with the narrator’s raw

confrontation with the insurance supervisor, condemning the company’s moral failure. Their outburst—"Do you automatons even know what a human being is?"—captures the chapter’s central conflict: the collision of love, medicine, and institutional indifference in the fight for a child’s survival.

THE WEEKEND JESSE

The chapter follows Jesse, a rebellious young man who steals a dump truck after his car is confiscated by his father. He describes the thrill of driving the massive vehicle and his encounter with Duracell Dan, a homeless man who initially cowers in fear before recognizing Jesse. Jesse invites Dan to join him on an arson mission, bonding over their shared outsider status. The narrative reveals Jesse's longing for connection, as he admits he brought Dan along not just for excitement but to combat his own loneliness.

A flashback reveals Jesse's childhood resentment toward his sister Kate, who required frequent medical attention due to an unspecified condition. His parents' compensatory gifts, like a coveted skateboard, never eased his sense of invisibility. A pivotal moment occurs when Kate returns home bleeding, causing his father to completely disregard Jesse's planned skateboarding outing. This incident solidifies Jesse's feeling of being overlooked, like "smoke" in his own family.

The present-day arson plot takes a dark turn when Dan becomes distraught, realizing too late that the burning shed housed another homeless person's belongings—possibly even a friend referred to as "the rat." Jesse tries to downplay the tragedy, but Dan's grief mirrors Jesse's own childhood pain of being unseen. The fire, initially a symbol of power and beauty to Jesse, becomes a metaphor for destruction that consumes the vulnerable.

The chapter concludes with Jesse recalling his first act of rebellion at age eleven—running away from home after feeling ignored. This memory bookends the narrative, connecting his present destructive behavior with childhood wounds. The juxtaposition of Jesse's fiery recklessness and Dan's quiet mourning highlights the cyclical nature of pain and the human need to be witnessed, even in acts of destruction.

THE WEEKEND JESSE

The chapter introduces Jesse, a rebellious young man who steals a dump truck after his car is confiscated by his father. He describes the thrill of operating the massive vehicle and picks up Duracell Dan, a homeless acquaintance, to join him on an arson mission. Their interaction reveals Jesse's desire for companionship despite his reckless behavior. The narrative shifts to Jesse's childhood, recalling how he received a skateboard as a guilt gift from his parents during his sister Kate's medical crises, highlighting his feelings of neglect and invisibility within his family.

Jesse's childhood flashback reveals a pivotal moment when his sister's medical emergency interrupted their planned family outing, deepening his sense of being overlooked. This memory underscores his growing alienation, symbolized by his skateboard's unused potential and his father's distant gaze. The chapter then returns to the present, where Jesse and Dan arrive at an abandoned boathouse. Jesse sets it ablaze, initially proud of his destructive handiwork, until Dan's emotional reaction suggests someone might have been living inside.

The fire scene takes a dark turn as Dan's distress reveals the shed may have been a homeless person's shelter. Jesse's casual arson suddenly carries unintended consequences, contrasting sharply with his earlier excitement. Dan's tears and cryptic references to "the rat" force Jesse to confront the possibility that his actions may have harmed someone, puncturing his rebellious bravado with a dose of grim reality.

The chapter concludes with Jesse's childhood memory of running away after feeling invisible to his family, mirroring his present-day actions. Both timelines reveal his pattern of acting out for attention and connection, though with increasingly dangerous consequences. The juxtaposition of past neglect and present recklessness paints a portrait of a young man caught between seeking recognition and spiraling into self-destructive behavior.

THE WEEKEND ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna reflecting on the origins of human existence, contrasting mythological narratives like the Pawnee creation story with scientific explanations such as primordial soup and evolution. She muses on the improbability of life's complexity, noting how humans still manage to make flawed decisions despite their advanced cognitive abilities. This philosophical musing transitions into a starkly personal moment as Anna sits with her sister Kate and mother in the hospital, all avoiding the impending reality of Anna's upcoming trial and Kate's deteriorating health.

The family's denial is palpable as they distract themselves with trivial activities like watching *Happy Days* and solving crossword puzzles. Kate's brief moments of lucidity and normalcy—like scolding Anna for borrowing her CDs—mask the severity of her condition. Dr. Chance, a trusted figure, disrupts the facade by bluntly stating Kate's prognosis: she has only about a week left. The room falls into stunned silence, and Anna feels the weight of guilt, hinting at her conflicted role in Kate's medical journey.

Emotions run high as Kate confronts her mortality with surprising calm, thanking Dr. Chance for his honesty. Anna's mother collapses inward with grief, while Anna herself struggles to reconcile her feelings of responsibility. The tension culminates in a charged exchange between Anna and her mother, who snaps at her with haunted eyes. Anna retreats, using the crossword clue as a metaphor for her fractured family dynamics, symbolizing the unspoken pain and disconnect.

Later, Anna seeks solace in her father's office, confiding in Julia about her awkward teenage experiences, like a mortifying date with Kyle McFee. The conversation shifts from lighthearted embarrassment to deeper reflections on family and authenticity, as Anna compares staged store-bought photos to her own family's seemingly perfect yet

fragile image. The chapter closes with Anna's lingering uncertainty about her place in the world, mirroring her earlier musings on life's improbable origins and the messy reality of human relationships.

THE WEEKEND ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna reflecting on the origins of human existence, contrasting mythological narratives like the Pawnee creation story with scientific explanations such as primordial soup and evolution. She muses on the improbability of life's complexity, noting how humans still manage to make mistakes despite their advanced cognitive abilities. This philosophical musing transitions into a scene at the hospital, where Anna, her sister Kate, and their mother distract themselves from the impending trial and Kate's deteriorating health by engaging in mundane activities like watching *Happy Days* and solving crossword puzzles.

The tension escalates when Dr. Chance enters and delivers a grim prognosis about Kate's condition, revealing she may only have a week left to live. The family's fragile facade of normalcy shatters as the doctor's honesty forces them to confront reality. Anna's mother clings to hope for a transplant, but the unspoken legal battle over Anna's kidney donation looms large, creating an atmosphere of guilt and unease. Kate, however, responds with quiet acceptance, thanking Dr. Chance for his honesty, while Anna struggles with the weight of her family's expectations and emotions.

Later, Anna retreats to her father's office at the fire station, where she confides in Julia about her awkward experiences with a boy named Kyle. Their conversation shifts from lighthearted teenage embarrassment to deeper reflections on family and identity, as Anna examines old photos and questions the authenticity of familial bonds. The juxtaposition of her adolescent concerns with the life-and-death stakes of Kate's illness highlights Anna's internal conflict and the complexity of her emotional world.

The chapter closes with Anna's lingering sense of displacement and unresolved guilt. Her mother's sharp rebuke—"No, Anna. *You* stop"—echoes the family's collective denial and Anna's own struggle to reconcile her role in Kate's fate. The chapter masterfully intertwines themes of mortality, family dynamics, and the search for

identity, leaving Anna—and the reader—grappling with the weight of impossible choices and the fragility of human connections.

THE WEEKEND BRIAN

The chapter opens with a surreal scene where Mrs. Zegna, a woman dressed as an octopus, arrives at the station distraught after losing her home in a fire. Her only remaining belongings are a Halloween costume and a Peter Paul and Mary album collection stored in a locker. The narrator, Brian, offers to connect her with a shelter and assist with insurance, only to learn she has none, as she doesn’t believe in preparing for disaster. This encounter prompts Brian to reflect on his own relationship with adversity, setting the tone for the chapter’s exploration of loss and resilience.

The narrative shifts to a hospital where Brian visits Kate, who is gravely ill and hooked up to a morphine drip. Sara, Kate’s mother and Brian’s estranged partner, is asleep on a cot nearby. Their conversation is strained, filled with practical details about Kate’s condition, but devoid of the emotional connection they once shared. Brian recalls a road trip they took years ago, where they visited a fortune-teller who cryptically advised him to "save yourself." This memory highlights the emotional distance between them now, as Sara struggles to remember the trip altogether.

The tension escalates when Brian reveals his decision to support their daughter Anna’s petition to stop being a medical donor for Kate. Sara is furious, arguing that his testimony will sway the judge in Anna’s favor, potentially jeopardizing Kate’s survival. Their confrontation underscores the painful divide between them: Sara clings to the past and the hope of saving Kate, while Brian has accepted Anna’s autonomy and the inevitability of their fractured relationship. The scene is charged with unspoken grief and unresolved conflict.

The chapter closes with Sara expressing her desire to return to the past, to the love and connection they once shared. Brian, however, recognizes that neither of them is the same person they were during their happier times. The chapter poignantly captures the themes of change, loss, and the impossibility of reversing time, leaving

both characters—and the reader—to grapple with the weight of their choices and the irreversible passage of time.

THE WEEKEND BRIAN

The chapter opens with a surreal yet poignant scene where Mrs. Zegna, a woman dressed as an octopus, arrives at the station distraught after losing her home in a fire. Her only remaining belongings are a Halloween costume and a collection of albums, highlighting her vulnerability and refusal to live in fear of disaster. The narrator, Brian, offers practical help, but her lack of home insurance underscores her optimistic yet unprepared outlook. This encounter prompts Brian to reflect on his own shifting perspective toward life's unpredictability, setting the tone for the chapter's exploration of loss and resilience.

The narrative then shifts to a hospital where Brian visits his daughter Kate, who is recovering with the aid of morphine. His ex-wife, Sara, is also present, and their strained relationship is evident in their terse exchanges. Brian recalls a shared memory of a road trip and a fortune-teller's cryptic prophecy, which Sara seems to have forgotten. This memory contrasts sharply with their current dynamic, emphasizing how their once-close bond has deteriorated into practical, emotionless conversations. The fortune-teller's advice to "save yourself" foreshadows the moral dilemma Brian faces later in the chapter.

The tension escalates when Brian reveals his decision to support their other daughter, Anna, in her petition to stop being a medical donor for Kate. Sara is furious, arguing that this will likely sway the judge in Anna's favor, potentially jeopardizing Kate's survival. Their confrontation lays bare the irreconcilable differences between them, as each is forced to confront the painful consequences of their choices. The emotional weight of the scene is palpable, as both characters grapple with guilt, love, and the impossibility of returning to their past selves.

The chapter closes with Sara expressing her longing to revert to their former relationship, but Brian acknowledges that neither of them is the same person they

once were. The bittersweet reflection on their shared history—full of adventure and promises—underscores the irreversible changes wrought by time and circumstance. The chapter masterfully intertwines themes of memory, identity, and the harsh realities of moving forward, leaving readers with a sense of unresolved tension and emotional depth.

THE WEEKEND SARA

The chapter opens with Anna, a ten-year-old girl, asking her parents, Brian and Sara, for $614.96 to buy hockey goalie equipment after revealing she has secretly been practicing with a boys' team. Initially skeptical, her parents are surprised to learn she has been invited to join the team as their first female player. Anna's passion for hockey and her natural talent become apparent, but the cost of the gear sparks a family discussion about finances and the unexpected discovery of their daughter's hidden interest.

Meanwhile, Kate, Anna's thirteen-year-old sister, struggles with graft-versus-host disease, a complication from her bone marrow transplant. Her condition flares up, causing a painful rash and swelling, but she reluctantly agrees to attend Anna's hockey game after her mother insists. Sara helps Kate disguise her symptoms with winter clothing, highlighting the family's balancing act between supporting Anna's milestones and accommodating Kate's health struggles. The scene underscores the emotional toll of Kate's illness on her self-esteem and family dynamics.

At the hockey game, Anna shines as the team's goalie, impressing her family with her skill and confidence. Despite initial reluctance, even Kate becomes engrossed in the game, and Brian marvels at Anna's natural talent. The moment is bittersweet, as the family's joy is overshadowed by the underlying tension of Kate's deteriorating health. The game serves as a rare respite from their ongoing medical struggles, emphasizing Anna's resilience and the family's need for normalcy.

The chapter takes a dark turn when Kate suffers a severe hemorrhaging episode later that night, requiring emergency hospitalization. Dr. Chance proposes an experimental arsenic treatment as a last resort, acknowledging the grim prognosis. Sara and Brian grapple with the weight of this decision, confronting the possibility of losing Kate after years of battling her illness. The chapter ends on a poignant note, leaving the family's

future uncertain as they face yet another medical crisis.

THE WEEKEND SARA

The chapter opens with Anna, a ten-year-old girl, asking her parents, Brian and Sara, for $614.96 to purchase hockey goaltender leg pads from eBay. Initially hesitant, her parents press for details, leading Anna to reveal she has secretly been practicing as a goalie for a boys' hockey team after filling in for a sick player. Despite their surprise, Anna's passion and talent for the sport become evident, though her parents need time to consider the costly equipment. The scene highlights Anna's determination and the parents' cautious yet supportive dynamic.

Meanwhile, Kate, Anna's older sister, struggles with graft-versus-host disease, a complication from her bone marrow transplant. When the family prepares to attend Anna's hockey game, Kate refuses to go due to a severe flare-up of her condition, which causes a rash and swelling. Sara insists Kate come along, disguising her with gloves, a hat, and a scarf to protect her self-esteem. This subplot underscores Kate's ongoing health battles and the family's balancing act between her needs and Anna's milestones.

At the hockey game, Anna shines as the team's goalie, impressing her family with her natural talent. Brian and Sara watch in awe as Anna makes remarkable saves, while even reluctant Kate gets caught up in the excitement. The game becomes a rare moment of normalcy and pride for the family, contrasting sharply with their usual medical crises. Anna's success on the ice serves as a brief respite from the heavier themes of illness and sacrifice.

The chapter takes a dark turn when Kate suffers a severe hemorrhage later that night, requiring emergency hospitalization. Dr. Chance presents arsenic therapy as a last-resort treatment, though its success is uncertain. Sara immediately agrees, while Brian remains silent, reflecting their differing coping mechanisms. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, emphasizing the family's relentless struggle with Kate's illness and the

emotional toll it takes on them all.

THE WEEKEND ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna pondering the nature of existence in Heaven, questioning whether individuals retain their physical appearance at the time of death or can choose their ideal age. She speculates that Heaven might allow personal preferences, such as selecting one's appearance or surroundings, and reflects on her father's comment about feeling perpetually twenty-one at heart. This leads her to consider how people might recognize each other in the afterlife if they appear differently from their earthly selves, highlighting the complexities of identity and memory.

The narrative shifts to a tense meeting between Anna, her mother, and Campbell, her legal representative. Anna's mother arrives at the law office, visibly uncomfortable, and proposes a deal: Anna will donate a kidney to her sister Kate one final time, with no further medical demands in the future. The interaction is strained, with Campbell framing the discussion in legal terms while Anna observes her mother's emotional vulnerability. The scene underscores the emotional weight of the decision and the fractured dynamics within the family.

Anna reflects on a childhood memory involving Santa Claus, drawing a parallel between her disillusionment then and her current situation with her mother. She recalls testing her parents' omniscience by secretly wishing for a hamster, only to realize they couldn't fulfill desires they didn't know about. This memory reinforces her sense of betrayal and unmet expectations, framing her mother's plea as another instance of falling short. The emotional climax occurs when Anna initially embraces her mother but ultimately rejects her request, leaving her mother devastated.

The chapter concludes with Campbell questioning Anna's decision, emphasizing the gravity of her choice. Anna's internal conflict is palpable as she struggles to articulate her stance, leaving the reader uncertain about her final answer. The scene captures

the tension between familial duty and personal autonomy, with Anna's emotional turmoil at the forefront. The chapter masterfully intertwines philosophical musings with raw familial drama, leaving a lasting impact.

THE WEEKEND ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna's philosophical musings about the nature of Heaven, pondering what age people might assume in the afterlife. She speculates whether individuals can choose their appearance, imagining herself as a seventeen-year-old to compensate for her insecurities. Her father's comment about feeling twenty-one at heart leads her to consider that people may eternally identify with a specific age or phase of life. This introspection transitions into practical concerns, such as how loved ones would recognize each other in Heaven if they appear differently than expected, highlighting the tension between personal identity and external perception.

The narrative shifts to a tense meeting between Anna, her mother, and Campbell, the lawyer. Anna's mother arrives at the law office, visibly uncomfortable, and proposes a deal: Anna will donate a kidney to her sister Kate one final time, with no further medical demands. The interaction is fraught with unspoken emotions, as Anna observes her mother's vulnerability and her father's detachment. Campbell frames the discussion in legal terms, but Anna recognizes the deeper familial stakes beneath the formal negotiation. The scene underscores the emotional complexity of Anna's decision, which transcends legalities.

Anna reflects on a childhood memory involving Santa Claus, drawing a parallel to her current disillusionment with her parents. Just as she once realized her parents couldn't fulfill all her desires, she now grapples with their limitations in the face of Kate's illness. Despite her mother's heartfelt plea, Anna initially embraces her, creating a fleeting moment of connection. However, this tenderness shatters when Anna whispers, "I can't," rejecting the kidney donation. Her mother's stunned reaction and abrupt departure leave Anna in a charged silence, emphasizing the painful rift between them.

In the final scene, Campbell confronts Anna, asking if her refusal is truly what she wants. The chapter ends ambiguously, with Anna poised to answer but leaving her decision unresolved. This cliffhanger underscores the moral and emotional weight of her choice, balancing familial duty against personal autonomy. The chapter masterfully intertwines existential questions with intimate family drama, revealing Anna's internal conflict and the fragile dynamics of her relationships.

THE WEEKEND JULIA

Julia engages in a playful yet revealing conversation with her sister Izzy, debating her conflicted feelings for Campbell, a charming but difficult man from her past. Their banter is laced with humor and sibling rivalry as Izzy teases Julia about her attraction to "jerks" while engrossed in her favorite romantic films. The dialogue exposes Julia's internal struggle: she is drawn to Campbell's familiarity but resists rekindling their connection, fearing emotional entanglement. Meanwhile, Julia grapples with a professional dilemma—a high-stakes legal decision involving Anna Fitzgerald that weighs heavily on her conscience.

The tension escalates when Campbell unexpectedly arrives at Julia's home, using his knowledge of her curiosity about a plea bargain to coax her into dinner. Their exchange crackles with unresolved chemistry, as Campbell's confidence and wit challenge Julia's attempts to maintain boundaries. Izzy, amused by their dynamic, eggs Julia on, highlighting the inevitability of their connection. Campbell's persistence and Julia's reluctant compliance underscore the push-pull of their relationship, blending professional stakes with personal history.

At a marina, Campbell disarms Julia by insisting she remove her shoes and embrace spontaneity, a metaphor for lowering her emotional defenses. The serene setting contrasts with Julia's inner turmoil as she questions Campbell's motives in the legal case and her own vulnerability to him. Their shared moment on the grass—charged with nostalgia and unspoken affection—hints at deeper unresolved feelings. Julia's internal monologue reflects on the fleeting nature of summer and time, mirroring her hesitation to revisit the past with Campbell.

The chapter closes with Julia recalling a bartender's probing question about what she's "hiding from," underscoring her avoidance of emotional honesty. The fragmented scene at the bar reinforces her isolation and reluctance to confront her feelings. This

introspection, juxtaposed with Campbell's earlier insistence on living in the moment, paints Julia as a woman torn between self-protection and desire. The chapter masterfully intertwines legal drama with intimate character dynamics, leaving Julia's next steps tantalizingly uncertain.

THE WEEKEND JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia questioning her attraction to Campbell, a man she describes as an "asshole," while her sister Izzy is engrossed in a romantic movie. Their banter reveals Julia's internal conflict about her feelings for Campbell, as well as her professional dilemma regarding a high-stakes legal decision involving Anna Fitzgerald. Izzy teases Julia about her poor taste in men, suggesting it might be hereditary, while Julia admits she finds it easy to reconnect with Campbell despite their complicated history. The sisters' playful yet pointed exchange highlights Julia's emotional turmoil.

Julia's professional and personal lives collide as she prepares for a critical hearing that will determine Anna's future. She confesses to Izzy that her attraction to Campbell feels like laziness, as they already know each other so well. Izzy offers crude but practical advice, urging Julia to either act on her feelings or move on. The conversation shifts to Campbell's superficial charm, with Izzy comparing him to "marzipan frosting on a sardine." Their dialogue underscores Julia's struggle to reconcile her logical objections with her lingering emotions for Campbell.

The tension escalates when Campbell unexpectedly arrives at Julia's home, using a plea bargain offer as leverage to persuade her to join him for dinner. Their witty back-and-forth reveals their deep familiarity, with Campbell accurately predicting Julia's curiosity will outweigh her reluctance. Izzy, amused by their dynamic, eggs Julia on, further complicating her resolve. Campbell's confident persistence and Julia's reluctant compliance set the stage for a charged interaction, blending professional stakes with personal history.

The chapter concludes with Julia and Campbell at a marina, where he coaxes her to relax by removing her shoes and embracing the moment. Julia remains guarded, but Campbell's charm and the nostalgic summer setting begin to soften her resistance. Their exchange hints at unresolved feelings, with Julia reluctantly admitting Campbell

knows her too well. The scene captures the push-and-pull of their relationship, leaving Julia torn between her professional boundaries and her undeniable connection to Campbell.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with an intimate scene between the narrator and Julia, reminiscing about their past and the passage of fifteen years. The narrator reflects on their youthful relationship, contrasting the impulsive passion of their teenage years with the deeper, more nuanced connection they share now. Julia's independence and unapologetic individuality initially drew the narrator to her, but their relationship ultimately altered her free-spirited nature. The narrator admits to avoiding meaningful relationships after Julia, opting for fleeting encounters instead, yet finds himself unable to leave her this time, despite his habitual escape tendencies.

As the narrative shifts to the present, the narrator prepares for a court hearing, leaving Julia behind with uncharacteristic sincerity. He arrives at the courthouse to find chaos, with reporters swarming and key figures like Sara and Brian anxiously awaiting Anna, who is conspicuously absent. The tension escalates when Julia arrives, questioning the narrator's priorities and the viability of their rekindled relationship. The narrator, however, is preoccupied with finding Anna, sensing her hesitation and fear about the court proceedings.

The search leads the narrator to a hospital room where Anna is curled up beside her dying sister, Kate. The emotional weight of the scene is palpable, with Anna's defiance and Jesse's unexpected presence adding layers of complexity. The narrator persuades Anna to leave for the courthouse, but her ambivalence about the legal battle becomes evident. During the car ride, Anna deflects his probing questions about her true motivations, focusing instead on trivial legal precedents.

The chapter concludes with the narrator pulling over at a park, determined to confront Anna about her reluctance to proceed with the case. Her evasiveness and teenage defiance highlight the deeper emotional turmoil beneath her legal stance. The narrator's persistence suggests a growing understanding of her fears, mirroring his

own unresolved feelings about Julia and the passage of time. The chapter masterfully intertwines personal and legal conflicts, revealing the fragility of human connections and the weight of difficult choices.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with an intimate scene between the narrator and Julia in a small cabin, where their physical closeness contrasts with the emotional distance of their past. Reflecting on their teenage years, the narrator recalls how Julia's independence initially attracted him, but their relationship ultimately diminished her free-spirited nature. Now, fifteen years later, he struggles with fleeting connections and escape tactics, yet finds himself unable to leave Julia despite his usual patterns of detachment. The morning after, he departs without his customary symbolic gesture, hinting at unresolved feelings and personal growth.

The narrative shifts to the courthouse, where the narrator prepares for a hearing involving Anna, a key figure in the legal case. The scene is chaotic, with reporters swarming and tensions high as Anna's absence becomes apparent. Julia arrives unexpectedly, questioning the narrator's priorities and the viability of their rekindled connection. Their exchange reveals underlying conflicts about commitment and timing, as the narrator insists on addressing Anna's situation first. The urgency of the legal matter clashes with their personal dynamics, creating a palpable strain.

The narrator deduces Anna's location and finds her at the hospital with her terminally ill sister, Kate. The emotional weight of the scene is underscored by Anna's reluctance to leave and Jesse's unexpected presence, adding another layer of family complexity. Anna's sharp observation about Kate's condition highlights the harsh reality of their circumstances. The narrator, though focused on the legal proceedings, is struck by Anna's ambiguous motivations, which remain unclear despite his professional expertise in understanding human behavior.

As they drive away from the hospital, the narrator deliberately detours to a park, pressing Anna to explain her true reasons for pursuing the legal case. Her evasive response and teenage defiance contrast with the gravity of the situation, leaving the

narrator frustrated yet determined to uncover her deeper motivations. The chapter ends on a note of unresolved tension, both in the legal drama and the narrator's personal life, as he grapples with professional duty and emotional introspection.

MONDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna reflecting on the imaginative language of childhood, which she calls "Ifspeak"—a boundless way of thinking where anything is possible. She contrasts this with adulthood, where such openness slowly fades. Anna's introspection sets the tone for her internal conflict as she navigates a courtroom battle over her medical autonomy. The surreal experience of hearing her life discussed as if she isn't present underscores her growing awareness of the complexities of adulthood and the weight of her decisions.

During a recess, Anna confides in her lawyer, Campbell, expressing her uncertainty about the case. She admits that witnessing her mother's testimony made her question the simplicity of her stance. Anna grapples with guilt and hypothetical scenarios, wondering if her sister, Kate, would have made the same choices. Her doubts reveal her emotional turmoil and the moral ambiguity of the situation, highlighting her transition from childhood innocence to adult responsibility.

Anna recalls babysitting six-year-old twins, who remind her of her lost childhood spontaneity. Their innocent questions about the future contrast sharply with her current reality, where she feels burdened by the knowledge of life's hardships. This memory reinforces her sense of isolation and the irreversible passage into adulthood, as she realizes she can no longer view the world with the same unfiltered optimism as the children she cares for.

The chapter shifts to the courtroom, where Campbell questions Dr. Bergen, an ethics expert, about parental authority and adolescent consent in medical decisions. Dr. Bergen explains the principles guiding ethical committees, emphasizing the balance between parental rights and a minor's maturity. Anna's internal commentary reveals her skepticism about the system, as she compares it to unenforced laws. The testimony underscores the central conflict: whether Anna's voice should outweigh her

parents' wishes in determining her medical future.

MONDAY ANNA

The chapter explores the contrast between childhood imagination and adult reality through Anna's reflections. As a child, she recalls the boundless "Ifspeak" language of hypothetical scenarios, where anything feels possible. Now, as a teenager in a courtroom, she grapples with the weight of real-world decisions, feeling like an invisible observer in her own life. The narrative highlights how adulthood slowly closes the door on childhood wonder, leaving Anna torn between her past innocence and present responsibilities.

Anna's internal conflict deepens during a recess conversation with her lawyer, Campbell. She admits the legal proceedings feel surreal, especially hearing others dissect her life choices. Though committed to her decision, she questions whether winning the case will truly resolve her moral dilemma. Her mother's testimony about the complexity of their situation resonates, making Anna wonder if her sister, Kate, would have made the same sacrifices for her. These doubts signal her growing self-awareness and emotional maturity.

The chapter shifts to Anna's memories of babysitting six-year-old twins, contrasting their carefree curiosity with her own jaded perspective. Their innocent questions about the future remind her of lost simplicity, while she struggles with the burden of knowledge she can't share without sounding ominous. This interlude underscores Anna's transitional state—no longer a child but not yet comfortable with adult realities, caught between two worlds.

The courtroom drama resumes as Campbell questions Dr. Bergen about medical ethics and minor consent laws. The testimony reveals the tension between parental authority and adolescent autonomy in healthcare decisions, mirroring Anna's personal struggle. When Campbell implies Anna's parents may have conflicting interests, her mother objects, highlighting the family's fractured dynamics. The chapter ends with Dr.

Bergen confirming the ethics committee reviewed Kate's case twice, leaving readers anticipating the legal and emotional consequences of these proceedings.

MONDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Kate, a fourteen-year-old leukemia patient, striking up an unexpected conversation with Taylor Ambrose, a sixteen-year-old boy also undergoing treatment. Their banter is lighthearted despite the hospital setting, as they bond over their shared experiences with illness. Taylor’s charm and humor bring out a playful side of Kate that surprises her mother, who narrates the scene. The two exchange phone numbers, leaving Kate exhilarated by the possibility of a connection beyond their medical struggles. This moment marks a shift in Kate’s demeanor, as Taylor’s presence seems to uplift her in a way her treatments never could.

As their relationship develops, Kate’s phone calls with Taylor become a nightly ritual, filling her with a newfound joy and confidence. Her mother observes the transformation with awe, noting how love seems to rejuvenate Kate in contrast to the draining effects of her medical treatments. Kate’s self-perception begins to change, as she examines her reflection and wonders what Taylor sees in her. Their shared understanding of illness creates a deep bond, and Kate’s concern for Taylor’s well-being reveals her growing affection. Her mother recognizes this as a sign of maturity and emotional depth, though it also underscores the fragility of their circumstances.

Despite the happiness Taylor brings, Kate’s intuition warns her that something bad is looming. Her mother dismisses the superstition but acknowledges the harsh reality of their lives, where joy often feels fleeting. This foreshadowing is soon confirmed when Kate’s routine blood test reveals a relapse, shattering the temporary respite Taylor had provided. The chapter juxtaposes the buoyancy of first love with the cruel unpredictability of illness, highlighting the emotional whiplash Kate and her family endure. Even in the face of this setback, Taylor remains a source of strength for Kate, as their connection deepens through shared vulnerability.

The chapter concludes with Kate returning from her first date with Taylor, giddy with excitement as she recounts the experience to her sister, Anna. Their conversation reveals Kate’s innocence and wonder, as she describes the thrill of her first kiss and the intimacy of holding Taylor’s scarred hands. The scars, a reminder of their shared battles, symbolize their unique bond. Kate’s mother, eavesdropping on the sisters, reflects on the bittersweet nature of her daughter’s happiness, knowing it exists against the backdrop of ongoing medical uncertainty. The chapter captures the duality of Kate’s life—moments of normal teenage joy intertwined with the looming shadow of her illness.

MONDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Kate, a 14-year-old leukemia patient, meeting Taylor Ambrose, a 16-year-old boy undergoing chemotherapy, during their hospital treatments. Their playful banter about their conditions and hospital life reveals an instant connection, with Taylor’s humor and confidence drawing Kate out of her usual reserved demeanor. The narrator, likely Kate’s mother, observes their interaction with surprise and joy, noting how Taylor’s presence seems to invigorate Kate. Their exchange ends with Taylor asking for Kate’s phone number, leaving her exhilarated and hopeful about the possibility of a future relationship.

As the story progresses, Taylor and Kate’s bond deepens through nightly phone calls, which become a cherished ritual. Kate’s transformation is evident as she blossoms under the influence of first love, her happiness contrasting sharply with the harsh realities of her illness. The narrator reflects on the bittersweet beauty of witnessing Kate grow up, a milestone she once feared might never come. Kate’s newfound confidence is palpable, especially when she questions what Taylor sees in her, revealing her vulnerability and desire to be understood beyond her illness.

Their relationship takes a romantic turn when they go on their first date, a movie outing that ends with a memorable kiss. Kate describes the experience as "flying," a metaphor for the euphoria of young love. She shares details with her sister Anna, who listens with a mix of curiosity and amusement. The chapter highlights the innocence and intensity of their connection, as well as the shared understanding of their medical struggles, symbolized by Taylor’s scars, which Kate finds comforting rather than off-putting.

However, the chapter takes a somber turn when Kate’s routine blood tests reveal a relapse, shattering the fleeting normalcy she had found with Taylor. The narrator’s earlier joy is tempered by the cruel reminder of Kate’s fragile health. The chapter ends

on an uncertain note, with Kate’s optimism about love and life juxtaposed against the looming threat of her illness, leaving the reader to ponder the fragility of happiness in the face of adversity.

MONDAY JESSE

The chapter opens with the narrator, Jesse, recalling a summer at fourteen when they were sent to a boot camp on a farm for troubled kids. Assigned to herding sheep, Jesse describes the animals as frustratingly dumb and unpleasant, far from the idyllic image people might imagine. While reading and marking pages in *Tropic of Cancer*, Jesse hears a scream and discovers a sheep in distress during labor. Despite no prior experience, Jesse intervenes to help deliver the lamb, successfully saving its life. The lamb, distinct from the others, becomes a symbol of resilience, with its milky eyes hinting at a brush with death.

The narrative then shifts to the present, where Jesse visits their sister, Kate, in the hospital. Their banter is laced with dark humor, masking the underlying gravity of Kate’s deteriorating condition. Kate’s casual remark about missing Jesse hints at her awareness of her impending death, though neither openly acknowledges it. Their conversation turns to reincarnation, with Kate musing about returning in a future life, while Jesse responds with grim humor. The exchange reveals their coping mechanisms—Kate’s quiet acceptance and Jesse’s deflection through sarcasm.

As Kate drifts back to sleep, Jesse reflects on childhood games of bargaining with fate to delay the inevitable, now replaying those futile attempts to prolong Kate’s life. Overwhelmed by emotion, Jesse asks Kate if she’s afraid of dying, to which Kate responds cryptically, “I’ll let you know.” The moment underscores the unspoken tension between them—Jesse’s desperation to hold on and Kate’s resigned calm. Jesse’s internal turmoil erupts into physical frustration, culminating in punching a hospital wall, a futile outlet for their grief.

The chapter poignantly contrasts Jesse’s past act of saving a life with their present helplessness in the face of Kate’s decline. The lamb’s survival becomes a metaphor for fleeting hope, while Kate’s condition forces Jesse to confront the limits of control. The

raw emotion and dark humor underscore the siblings’ bond, making their impending separation all the more heartbreaking. Jesse’s outburst reflects the universal struggle to accept loss, leaving readers with a sense of unresolved anguish.

MONDAY JESSE

The chapter opens with the narrator, Jesse, recalling a summer at fourteen when they were sent to a boot camp on a farm for troubled kids. Assigned to herding sheep, Jesse describes the animals as frustratingly dumb and unpleasant, far from the idyllic image people might imagine. While reading and marking pages in *Tropic of Cancer*, Jesse hears a scream and discovers a sheep struggling to give birth. Despite their inexperience, Jesse intervenes to help deliver the lamb, saving its life. This moment becomes a defining memory, as the lamb survives and stands out from the others, marked by its resilience and a faint, otherworldly presence in its eyes.

The narrative then shifts to the present, where Jesse visits their sister, Kate, in the hospital. Their reunion is bittersweet, filled with dark humor and unspoken grief. Kate, clearly gravely ill, jokes about being in Hell upon seeing Jesse, who responds with characteristic wit. Their banter masks the underlying tension of Kate's impending death, though moments of raw emotion break through. When Kate casually mentions she'll miss Jesse, it catches them both off guard, highlighting the inevitability of loss. The conversation turns to reincarnation, with Kate musing about returning in a future life, while Jesse cynically suggests they'd come back as carrion, a remark that briefly unsettles Kate.

As the hospital machines beep in the background, Jesse's anxiety surges, and they recall childhood superstitions, like bargaining to delay nightfall by holding their breath. Now, they irrationally hope to stall Kate's decline through sheer will. Blurting out a question about whether Kate fears dying, Jesse receives a cryptic response: "I'll let you know." Kate then drifts back to sleep, leaving Jesse alone with their grief. The unfairness of the situation weighs heavily on Jesse, who recognizes that life rarely gives people what they deserve, especially in matters of life and death.

Overwhelmed by emotion, Jesse storms out of the room and punches a hole in the hospital wall, a futile attempt to release their anger and sorrow. The chapter closes with Jesse’s visceral reaction to helplessness, mirroring the earlier lamb’s struggle for survival. The parallel between the lamb’s near-death experience and Kate’s terminal condition underscores the themes of resilience, loss, and the inevitability of mortality. Jesse’s raw outburst contrasts with their earlier sarcasm, revealing the depth of their love and pain for Kate.

MONDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a detailed, unsettling recipe for creating an explosive using household chemicals, setting a tense and dangerous tone. The narrator, a witness in a courtroom, is abruptly called away by their department, hinting at their professional role in law enforcement or fire investigation. Outside the courthouse, they face a barrage of intrusive media questions, revealing a personal tragedy—the "bleached bones of my family"—suggesting a backstory of loss and public scrutiny. The narrator's search for Anna and Jesse, two absent figures in their life, underscores themes of abandonment and fractured relationships.

The narrator returns home to find Jesse's apartment empty, with clues like an unrecyclable orange juice container highlighting ongoing domestic frustrations. A flashback reveals Jesse's habitual unreliability, deepening the narrator's sense of isolation. Meanwhile, the stakes escalate as the narrator investigates a deliberately set fire at an elementary school. The arsonist's sophistication—using gasoline and a Molotov cocktail—points to a calculated act, with a cigarette butt left behind as a taunting signature. The narrator's expertise shines as they deduce the fire's origin and the arsonist's methods, including a broken window used to accelerate the blaze.

Confrontation erupts when the narrator ambushes Jesse in his apartment, accusing him of involvement in the fires. Evidence like muriatic acid and a Clorox container ties Jesse to the explosives used in the school fire. The narrator's anger and desperation peak as they physically confront Jesse, demanding answers about his potential role in the arson and the near-death of a homeless man. The chapter ends mid-confrontation, leaving Jesse's guilt unresolved but heavily implied, with the narrator's emotional turmoil mirroring the chaos of the fires they investigate.

Throughout the chapter, themes of betrayal, trauma, and unchecked violence intertwine. The narrator's dual roles—as a professional investigator and a grieving,

distrustful family member—create a compelling tension. The technical details of arson contrast sharply with the raw emotional exchanges, painting a portrait of a protagonist grappling with duty and personal demons. The chapter's abrupt ending leaves readers questioning Jesse's motives and the narrator's capacity for justice or vengeance.

MONDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a detailed, unsettling recipe for creating an explosive using household chemicals, setting a tense tone. The narrator, seemingly a fire investigator or first responder, reflects on the emotional toll of waiting and witnessing tragedy while juggling professional duties. Amid a courtroom appearance, they are abruptly called to an emergency—a suspicious elementary school fire. The scene shifts to their frustrated search for Anna and Jesse, revealing strained family dynamics and Jesse's irresponsible habits, symbolized by his careless recycling.

At the fire scene, the narrator examines the devastation, noting the arsonist's calculated methods: gasoline accelerant, Molotov cocktail remnants, and a strategically broken window to fuel the flames. A recovered cigarette butt suggests the perpetrator lingered to watch the destruction. Colleagues like Paulie and Caesar provide context, but the narrator's focus sharpens on the deliberate cruelty of targeting a school, even during summer break. The technical details of fire investigation blend with their simmering anger at the unknown arsonist.

Returning to Jesse's apartment, the narrator confronts him about suspicious materials—muriatic acid, bleach containers—linking them to the explosive used in the school fire. Their exchange crackles with hostility, as Jesse deflects accusations while the narrator pieces together circumstantial evidence. The confrontation escalates, revealing deeper fractures in their relationship and the narrator's growing suspicion that Jesse may be involved in the arson spree.

The chapter closes with a return to the explosive recipe, mirroring the opening and underscoring the cyclical nature of violence. The narrator's internal conflict—between professional duty and personal loyalty—remains unresolved, leaving readers questioning Jesse's guilt and the narrator's next move. The blend of technical detail, emotional turmoil, and unresolved tension creates a gripping portrait of a protagonist

caught between justice and family.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter depicts a tense courtroom scene where attorney Mr. Alexander cross-examines Dr. Chance about the medical treatments involving Anna Fitzgerald, who was conceived as a genetic match to donate to her cancer-stricken sister Kate. Dr. Chance, visibly impatient to return to his patients, defends the procedures as medically necessary, emphasizing that Kate's survival to age sixteen is remarkable. The attorney highlights the ethical dilemma of Anna being used as a lifelong donor, questioning whether the Fitzgeralds were fully informed about the risks and long-term implications of these donations.

Mr. Alexander challenges Dr. Chance's assertion that Anna has suffered no significant harm, presenting a consent form outlining serious anesthesia risks. The doctor downplays these risks as rare, but the attorney counters by pointing out Anna's repeated exposure to dangerous procedures. The cross-examination reveals gaps in the doctor's memory about Anna's pain and recovery, suggesting a disregard for her experiences. The tension escalates as Mr. Alexander implies Anna's autonomy has been overlooked in the pursuit of saving Kate.

The discussion shifts to the experimental nature of some treatments, particularly growth factor shots, which Dr. Chance admits have only been tested on animals. Mr. Alexander draws parallels to historical medical disasters like thalidomide, casting doubt on the safety of these procedures. The attorney then focuses on the proposed kidney donation, questioning its impact on Anna's future health and activities. Dr. Chance initially claims minimal effects but is forced to acknowledge documented risks like hypertension and pregnancy complications when presented with evidence.

In the final exchange, Mr. Alexander underscores the hypocrisy of Dr. Chance's position—claiming Anna faces no long-term harm while admitting the lack of human studies on some treatments. The chapter ends with the attorney highlighting Anna's

passion for hockey, a sport she may have to abandon if she donates a kidney. This confrontation exposes the moral complexities of using one child's body to save another, leaving the reader to ponder the true cost of Kate's survival.

MONDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with a tense courtroom scene where the narrator, a lawyer, expresses frustration with doctors who resent being subpoenaed. Dr. Chance, the witness, is visibly impatient, eager to return to his dying patient, Kate Fitzgerald. The lawyer deliberately prolongs the questioning, highlighting the doctor's discomfort. The stakes are high, as Kate's survival depends on medical donations from her younger sister, Anna, who sits radiating tension beside the narrator. The dynamic sets the stage for a confrontation about the ethics of using one child to save another.

Dr. Chance defends the medical procedures Anna has undergone for Kate's benefit, insisting they were carefully explained and posed minimal risk. He acknowledges Anna's role as a "perfectly matched donor" but denies recommending her conception solely for this purpose. The lawyer challenges this, suggesting the Fitzgeralds were implicitly guided to create a genetically compatible child. The doctor deflects, emphasizing the unpredictability of cancer treatment and Kate's miraculous survival, though the lawyer underscores Anna's sacrifices as the foundation of that survival.

The lawyer intensifies his scrutiny, presenting consent forms detailing the risks Anna faced during procedures, including anesthesia complications. Dr. Chance downplays these risks as rare, but the lawyer counters with examples of historical medical failures, like thalidomide. He then questions the long-term effects of Anna's treatments, revealing gaps in human research. The doctor admits theoretical safety but lacks concrete data, undermining his earlier assurances. The exchange exposes the ethical ambiguity of subjecting Anna to unproven medical interventions.

Finally, the lawyer confronts Dr. Chance about the proposed kidney donation, challenging his claim that Anna would face no lasting consequences. He cites hospital literature warning of hypertension and activity restrictions, directly conflicting with Anna's hockey participation. The chapter ends with the lawyer poised to delve deeper

into Anna's past donations, leaving the doctor's credibility in question. The scene underscores the moral complexity of sacrificing one child's well-being for another's survival, framed by sharp legal and medical debate.

TUESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter centers on a pivotal courtroom scene where Brian Fitzgerald, father of Anna and Kate, is questioned about his stance on Anna's lawsuit seeking emancipation to avoid further medical donations for her sister. Campbell Alexander, Anna's lawyer, had hoped Brian would support Anna's decision, strengthening the case for emancipation. However, Brian's testimony takes an unexpected turn when he admits he still wishes Anna would donate a kidney to Kate, despite initially appearing to side with Anna. This revelation shocks both Campbell and Anna, undermining their legal strategy and exposing the emotional turmoil within the family.

Brian's testimony reveals the moral and emotional conflict he faces as a parent torn between two daughters. He recounts past disagreements with his wife, Sara, over using Anna's body for Kate's treatments, acknowledging his reluctance but ultimately justifying his decisions out of fear of losing Kate. His raw admission—"I couldn't let Kate die"—highlights the impossible choices faced by families in medical crises. Brian's breakdown on the stand underscores the weight of his guilt and confusion, as he admits there is no clear right answer, only unbearable sacrifices.

Anna's reaction to her father's testimony is one of quiet devastation. Her hope for parental support is shattered, and Campbell scrambles to salvage the case. The chapter captures Anna's isolation as she processes her father's betrayal, symbolized by her silent break of soul. Meanwhile, Sara's presence looms, her strained relationship with Brian adding another layer of tension. The family's fractured dynamics are laid bare, with each member grappling with love, duty, and survival in conflicting ways.

The chapter ends with a recess, leaving the characters—and readers—to absorb the emotional fallout. Anna and Campbell retreat to a vending machine area, where her subdued demeanor reflects her crushed hopes. Brian's testimony has not only jeopardized the legal case but also deepened the emotional chasm within the family.

The scene sets the stage for Sara's cross-examination, promising further confrontation and heartbreak as the courtroom drama unfolds.

TUESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter centers on a pivotal courtroom scene where Brian Fitzgerald, father of Anna and Kate, testifies in Anna's lawsuit for medical emancipation. Campbell Alexander, Anna's lawyer, had pinned his hopes on Brian supporting Anna's decision to stop being a donor for her terminally ill sister, Kate. However, Brian's testimony takes an unexpected turn when he admits he still wants Anna to donate a kidney, undermining Campbell's strategy. The emotional tension escalates as Brian grapples with his conflicting roles as a father to both daughters, torn between saving Kate and protecting Anna.

Brian's testimony reveals the family's painful history of medical interventions, starting with Anna's cord blood donation at birth and escalating to bone marrow and lymphocyte donations. He confesses his initial reluctance but explains how desperation to save Kate overrode his concerns. The cross-examination highlights Sara Fitzgerald's unwavering determination to keep Kate alive, contrasting with Brian's moments of doubt. His raw admission—"I know what's right. I know what's fair. But neither of those apply here"—captures the moral ambiguity of their situation.

Anna's reaction to her father's testimony is visceral, symbolized by her silent heartbreak as Brian's words shatter her hope for autonomy. Campbell scrambles to salvage the case, realizing Brian's reversal weakens Anna's emancipation claim. The scene underscores the family's fractured dynamics, particularly when Sara enters the courtroom, and Brian's gaze lingers on her, emphasizing their unresolved conflict. The chapter paints a poignant picture of a family trapped in an impossible ethical dilemma.

The recess scene shifts to Anna and Campbell in a quieter moment, where her subdued demeanor reflects her devastation. Brian's emotional collapse on the witness stand—forehead pressed to the wood—mirrors the chapter's central theme: the crushing weight of impossible choices. The narrative leaves the reader questioning

whether legal emancipation can resolve a crisis rooted in love, guilt, and survival, setting the stage for Sara's impending cross-examination and the trial's uncertain outcome.

TUESDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara reflecting on the passage of time and how it has changed her husband, Brian. Despite the years and the challenges they've faced, she still sees the essence of the man she fell in love with—his resolve, his quiet will, and the familiar features she cherishes. Their relationship is strained, evident in the courtroom setting where they exchange hesitant greetings. Sara's internal monologue reveals her longing for reconciliation and her regret over how their lives have diverged, yet she acknowledges that change isn't always negative, comparing it to the formation of a pearl.

As the courtroom scene unfolds, Sara and Brian share a poignant memory of a spontaneous family trip to Seal Cove, Maine, where they embraced uncertainty and created lasting memories. This recollection highlights their shared history and the deep bond they once had. The moment shifts the dynamic between them, transforming their adversarial positions into a fleeting reconnection. Brian's admission that the family will miss Kate if she's gone underscores the emotional weight of their current situation, and for a moment, they are united in their grief and love for their children.

The narrative delves into Sara's realization that life's minutiae have overshadowed their larger accomplishments as a family. She acknowledges how they've become consumed by daily struggles, losing sight of the joy and connection they've built. Brian's return home that night symbolizes a tentative step toward healing, as they both tuck Anna into bed and share a quiet moment of understanding. The Oreo cookie scene, where Brian feeds Sara, becomes a metaphor for their rekindled intimacy and the sweetness of reconciliation.

In the final paragraph, Sara sits with Anna on Kate's bed, offering her daughter reassurance rather than reprimand. She acknowledges Anna's desire for autonomy

and validates her feelings, emphasizing that diverging from expectations doesn’t equate to failure. This moment reflects Sara’s growth and her attempt to mend fractured relationships within the family. The chapter closes with a sense of tentative hope, as Sara and Brian begin to navigate their way back to each other, united by their shared history and love for their children.

TUESDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara reflecting on her husband Brian's enduring qualities despite the passage of time, comparing their relationship to a pearl formed around irritation. She notes how his steady nature once drew her to him, even as she grapples with the changes in their marriage. The courtroom setting underscores their emotional distance, with Sara yearning to reconnect but struggling to bridge the gap. Her internal monologue reveals a mix of regret and longing, as she questions whether their shared history can overcome their current rift.

During the courtroom exchange, Sara and Brian unexpectedly find common ground while reminiscing about a family vacation, highlighting their deep shared history. The memory of their spontaneous trip to Maine, though fraught with mishaps, becomes a poignant symbol of their resilience as a couple. This moment of connection contrasts sharply with the legal tension, as Brian acknowledges the joy their family has experienced despite their struggles. The scene captures the complexity of their relationship, where love and conflict coexist.

Sara's introspection deepens as she realizes that life's challenges have obscured their accomplishments as parents and partners. She acknowledges that their focus on daily struggles has made them lose sight of the bigger picture. The possibility of losing their daughter Kate forces Sara to confront what truly matters, recognizing that their shared memories and experiences are irreplaceable. This epiphany softens her stance toward Brian, allowing her to see his actions as stemming from love rather than opposition.

The chapter concludes with a tentative reconciliation, as Brian and Sara share a quiet moment over vending machine snacks, symbolizing their fragile but enduring connection. Sara's question about their parenting reflects her vulnerability, while Brian's uncertain response underscores the universality of parental doubts. Their return home together suggests a renewed commitment to their family, even as Sara

offers Anna unexpected understanding about individuality. The chapter ends on a note of cautious hope, with Sara beginning to accept that life's unpredictability doesn't negate its value.

WEDNESDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia returning from an early morning run, visibly agitated. Her sister Izzy questions her unusual behavior, hinting at deeper emotional turmoil. Julia's frustration escalates when her coffee maker fails, triggering an outburst that reveals her underlying distress. Through tearful confessions, it becomes clear Julia is grappling with repeated personal betrayals, likely from a romantic partner. Izzy offers darkly humorous support, underscoring their close bond and Julia's cyclical pattern of heartbreak.

The scene shifts to a courthouse, where Julia encounters Judge the dog and overhears a heated argument between Campbell, her colleague, and Anna, a young client. Campbell's frustration with Anna's refusal to testify exposes his professional and personal conflicts. Julia intervenes, challenging Campbell's emotional detachment and accusing him of using cynicism as a shield. Their exchange highlights Julia's perceptiveness and Campbell's discomfort with vulnerability, setting the stage for unresolved tension.

Julia confronts Campbell about his fear of emotional intimacy, drawing parallels between his behavior and Anna's reluctance to face her mother. She critiques his tendency to distance himself from meaningful connections, including their own fleeting relationship. Campbell deflects her accusations, but Julia's words clearly unsettle him. The confrontation reveals Julia's own emotional wounds and her frustration with Campbell's inability to acknowledge his feelings, even as she remains drawn to him.

The chapter closes with an interrupted moment of potential honesty between Julia and Campbell. Just as Campbell seems poised to reveal something personal, their conversation is cut short by Vern's arrival. The unresolved tension lingers as Campbell shifts focus back to the trial, leaving Julia—and the reader—wondering what he might have said. The scene underscores the recurring theme of missed connections and the

barriers both characters erect to protect themselves from further hurt.

WEDNESDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia returning from an early morning run, visibly agitated. Her sister Izzy questions her unusual behavior, hinting at deeper emotional turmoil. Julia’s frustration escalates when her coffee maker fails, culminating in an outburst where she breaks the carafe and collapses in tears. The interaction reveals Julia’s vulnerability and hints at a recurring personal betrayal, as she confides in Izzy about feeling "stupid" for falling into the same painful pattern. Izzy offers darkly humorous revenge fantasies, showcasing their close bond and mutual support.

The scene shifts to a courthouse where Julia encounters Judge, Campbell’s dog, who leads her to a heated argument between Campbell and his client, Anna. Their exchange exposes tensions over Anna’s refusal to testify and Campbell’s perceived failure as her lawyer. Julia observes the conflict with a mix of detachment and personal resonance, recalling her own feelings of abandonment and self-blame. The confrontation underscores the emotional stakes of the legal case and Julia’s growing awareness of Campbell’s defensive behavior.

Julia and Campbell’s subsequent argument becomes the chapter’s emotional core. She accuses him of emotional avoidance, criticizing his tendency to push people away and reduce relationships to superficial transactions. Her sharp observations pierce his facade, exposing his fear of vulnerability. Campbell’s deflection and Julia’s frustration highlight their unresolved tension, with Julia challenging him to confront his feelings for Anna and himself. The dialogue reveals Julia’s insight into Campbell’s character and her own lingering hurt from their past.

The chapter closes with a moment of potential vulnerability as Campbell almost confesses something about Judge, but the opportunity is lost when Vern interrupts. Julia’s hope for honesty is dashed as Campbell reverts to professional detachment, leaving their emotional conflict unresolved. The abrupt ending underscores the cyclical

nature of their interactions, with both characters retreating into familiar patterns of avoidance and missed connections. The scene leaves their relationship—and Julia’s emotional journey—poised at a crossroads.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with attorney Campbell Alexander in a tense courtroom scene, grappling with personal and professional conflicts. His client, Anna Fitzgerald, remains unresponsive, while Julia, the woman he loves, is about to take the stand. The atmosphere is charged with unspoken tension, underscored by Anna's refusal to pick up his dropped pen, signaling her anger. The judge allows a psychiatrist, Dr. Beata Neaux, to testify out of order, setting the stage for a pivotal exchange about Anna's capacity to make medical decisions regarding her sister Kate.

Dr. Neaux testifies that Anna, as a 13-year-old, lacks the maturity to make an independent decision about donating a kidney to Kate. She argues that Anna would benefit psychologically from the donation, citing studies that show child donors often feel like "superheroes" and gain higher self-esteem. The psychiatrist emphasizes the importance of parental guidance, suggesting Anna's parents should make the decision for her. The judge and Julia appear to take her testimony seriously, while Campbell dismisses it as "psychobabble bullshit," highlighting his skepticism of the expert's conclusions.

Campbell cross-examines Dr. Neaux, turning her arguments against Sara Fitzgerald, Anna's mother. He questions whether Sara, who is deeply invested in Kate's survival, can make an unbiased decision either. By applying the psychiatrist's own logic, he suggests Sara is psychologically compromised, acting more like a "donor" than a parent. The courtroom erupts as Campbell challenges the assumption that parents always know best, forcing Dr. Neaux to concede that Sara's judgment may also be clouded by her emotional attachment to Kate's well-being.

The chapter concludes with Campbell's pointed critique of the family dynamics, arguing that parental authority isn't infallible. His closing remarks underscore the moral complexity of the case, leaving the judge and Sara visibly unsettled. The

exchange reveals the deeper conflict between individual autonomy and familial obligation, with Campbell positioning himself as the lone voice of reason in a room swayed by emotional appeals. The scene sets up further tension as the legal battle over Anna's agency intensifies.

WEDNESDAY JULIA

The chapter opens with Julia encountering Anna in the courthouse bathroom during a break in the trial. Their tense interaction reveals Anna's reluctance to testify, while Julia offers vague wisdom about sacrifice. The conversation shifts to Julia's Guatemalan knapsack, sparking a metaphorical exchange about truth and complexity. Anna's abrupt departure leaves Julia pondering her words as the scene transitions to the courtroom, where Julia, as the guardian ad litem, prepares to deliver her recommendation in Anna's medical emancipation case.

Julia's testimony explores the Fitzgerald family dynamics, acknowledging the parents' loving intentions while critiquing their single-minded focus on Kate's survival at Anna's expense. She frames Anna as a child burdened by lifelong responsibility for her sister's health, caught between familial love and bodily autonomy. The narrative then flashes back to Julia's personal history with Campbell, revealing how their past romantic relationship and painful breakup shaped her emotional resilience. These memories underscore her understanding of love's sacrifices and the difficulty of letting go.

The chapter delves deeper into Julia's psyche through a raw recollection of her post-breakup self-destructive behavior, using a meaningless sexual encounter to numb her pain. This experience mirrors Anna's emotional detachment, symbolized by lost balloons representing love slipping away. Julia's personal turmoil informs her professional perspective as she analyzes the family's crisis-driven decision-making, comparing Kate's illness to a runaway train with Anna trapped on the tracks by her parents' expectations and her own conditioned compliance.

In her final courtroom remarks, Julia concludes that neither Anna nor her parents can make unbiased medical decisions, having all been compromised by years of emergency responses to Kate's condition. While acknowledging the medical clarity that Anna shouldn't be forced to donate, she highlights the psychological complexity of

separating Anna's identity from her donor role. The chapter ends with Judge DeSalvo pressing for Julia's formal recommendation, leaving her decisive conclusion pending as Campbell watches intently, his service dog's whining adding tension to the climactic moment.

WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with a tense courtroom scene where the narrator is relieved that their case hasn't been dismissed despite Julia's emotional testimony. Julia, serving as a guardian ad litem, appears visibly distressed about the impact of the case on Anna, the young girl at the center of the legal battle. The narrator's dog, Judge, adds to the tension by being disruptive, but the narrator remains focused on Julia's testimony, determined not to miss any critical details. The scene sets up the emotional weight of the case and the personal stakes for those involved.

Julia Romano, the guardian ad litem, expresses her struggle to reach a clear recommendation for the court. She acknowledges the Fitzgeralds' love-driven decisions for their daughters but also recognizes Anna's bravery in standing up for herself, even at the risk of losing her sister. Julia frames the dilemma as a "Solomon's choice," emphasizing the impossibility of splitting a family without profound consequences. Her testimony highlights the moral complexity of the case, where neither side is entirely right or wrong, and the court must weigh love against individual autonomy.

Amid the courtroom tension, Anna suddenly whispers to the narrator that she is ready to talk. The narrator is stunned but cautious, fearing Anna might change her mind if given a moment's hesitation. The dog's continued whining and nudging add to the urgency, but the narrator prioritizes Anna's unexpected decision to speak. This moment marks a pivotal shift in the chapter, as Anna prepares to take control of her own narrative in front of the judge and the court.

Anna stands up, commanding the courtroom's attention, and addresses Judge DeSalvo directly. Her declaration that she has something to say signals a turning point in the case, suggesting she is ready to voice her own perspective after years of silence. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, leaving readers eager to hear Anna's testimony and its

potential impact on the legal proceedings. The emotional and legal stakes are at their peak, underscoring the themes of agency, family, and difficult choices.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna recounting a traumatic childhood memory of her first oral presentation in third grade, where she vomited in front of her classmates while discussing kangaroos. This humiliating experience earned her the nickname "KangaRalph" and left her with a lasting aversion to public speaking. The anecdote serves as a metaphor for her current anxiety on the witness stand, where she fears not just nervousness but the consequences of revealing too much. The scene sets the tone for her internal conflict and the high-stakes nature of her testimony.

Anna’s discomfort is palpable as she observes the courtroom, her parents, and her lawyer, Campbell, who appears unwell. Her desire to flee contrasts with Campbell’s unexpected whisper about a childhood friend, which momentarily lightens the mood and gives her the courage to continue. The tension escalates as Campbell’s dog disrupts the proceedings, adding a layer of chaos to the already fraught atmosphere. Anna’s internal monologue reveals her desperation to escape her reality, fantasizing about a life far removed from her current predicament.

The core conflict emerges as Anna reveals the reason for her lawsuit: her mother asked her to donate a kidney to her sister, Kate, who is suffering from kidney failure. The family’s emotional turmoil is laid bare, with Kate resisting further medical interventions and their mother pleading for Anna’s compliance. Anna’s mixed feelings—fear, obligation, and resentment—are underscored by her unanswered questions about the risks and long-term implications of the surgery. The chapter highlights the moral and emotional weight of her decision.

As the testimony continues, Campbell probes Anna’s autonomy in filing the lawsuit, emphasizing her agency in a situation where she feels powerless. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with Anna poised to either reveal the truth or perpetuate a lie. The chaotic courtroom, Campbell’s erratic behavior, and Anna’s internal struggle create a

sense of impending revelation, leaving the reader eager to see how her story will unfold. The chapter masterfully blends humor, tension, and emotional depth to explore themes of family, sacrifice, and self-determination.

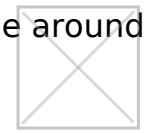
WEDNESDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a reflective monologue comparing the disorientation of space travel to the narrator's own sense of confusion upon returning to a world that no longer makes sense. The narrator, an armchair astronomer, grapples with fragmented conversations—realizing they haven’t truly listened to Jesse and that Anna’s words hold missing pieces. This introspection leads to a revelation about perception: like Aboriginal Australians finding meaning in the dark spaces between stars, the narrator understands that truth often lies in overlooked or unseen elements. This philosophical musing is abruptly interrupted when Campbell Alexander, a lawyer, collapses into a grand mal seizure in the courtroom.

The scene shifts to urgent action as the narrator, applying medical knowledge, tends to Campbell while his service dog surprisingly assists by fetching a bite block. The courtroom descends into chaos, with the judge sealing the room and an ambulance called. Julia, visibly distressed, pleads for help, but the narrator explains that waiting is the only option. The seizure’s unpredictability mirrors the narrator’s earlier reflections on life’s instability, underscored by a digression into astronomy—how the earth’s wobbling axis has altered zodiac alignments over millennia, rendering ancient star maps inaccurate.

Campbell regains consciousness in the judge’s chambers, disoriented and embarrassed. The narrator administers antiseizure medication and helps him change clothes, a moment that underscores Campbell’s vulnerability. Their conversation reveals he has hidden his epilepsy since a car accident at 18, a fact now exposed in front of everyone, including Anna, who was testifying. Julia’s arrival interrupts them, her stunned expression signaling a shift in her perception of Campbell. The narrator tactfully exits, leaving them to confront this new reality.

The chapter closes with a return to celestial metaphors, emphasizing how appearances deceive. Stars like Alpha Centauri, seemingly singular, are actually complex systems, much like human lives. The narrator draws parallels between disparate cultures—Greek, Aboriginal, and African—all finding unique stories in the same cosmic patterns. This reinforces the chapter’s central theme: truth is multifaceted, and understanding requires looking beyond the obvious, whether at the stars or the hidden struggles of those around us.



WEDNESDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell vividly describing the debilitating aftermath of a grand mal seizure, comparing it to a severe hangover followed by being hit by a truck. Disoriented and physically weakened, he is approached by Julia, who notices his seizure assistance dog. Their conversation is tense yet intimate, with Julia questioning why Campbell never revealed his condition to her. Campbell deflects her concern, focusing instead on locating Anna, hinting at unresolved tensions and a deeper history between them.

Campbell reveals the origin of his seizures, tracing them back to a car accident the night he planned to reunite with Julia after their graduation. The accident left him with unexplained seizures, a condition he chose to hide, believing it made him unworthy of Julia's love. He admits to pushing her away to spare her the burden of his illness, emphasizing his fear of becoming a limitation to her free-spirited nature. Julia reacts with hurt, accusing him of robbing her of the choice to decide for herself.

The emotional core of the chapter unfolds as Julia confronts Campbell's flawed reasoning. She challenges his perception of perfection, listing her own imperfections and asserting that love transcends flaws. Her heartfelt declaration—"You don't love someone because they're perfect; you love them in spite of the fact that they're not"—forces Campbell to reconsider his assumptions. The rawness of their exchange highlights the depth of their unresolved feelings and the years of misunderstanding between them.

The chapter concludes with Julia defiantly reclaiming agency in their relationship, vowing to leave Campbell—but only after fifty or sixty years. Her statement, both playful and profound, signals a commitment to stand by him despite his condition. This poignant resolution underscores the chapter's themes of vulnerability, acceptance, and the enduring power of love, leaving Campbell emotionally disarmed and the

reader hopeful for their future.

WEDNESDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna encountering Campbell in the men's restroom, where he reveals his vulnerability by explaining his seizure disorder and his service dog Judge's ability to predict episodes. Their conversation shifts to Anna's discomfort about testifying in court, as Campbell tries to reassure her with humor and resilience. Despite his recent public seizure, Campbell insists on continuing the trial, demonstrating his determination to uncover the truth about Anna's case. The scene highlights the parallels between Campbell's physical struggles and Anna's emotional turmoil, as both grapple with loss of control over their circumstances.

In the courtroom, Anna is pressured to reveal the shocking truth: her sister Kate had asked her to help end her life rather than continue suffering from her illness. Anna's confession exposes the deep family conflict, particularly her mother's denial and heartbreak over Kate's despair. The emotional tension escalates as Anna accuses her mother of ignoring Kate's suffering, suggesting Kate feared her death would emotionally destroy their mother. This revelation forces the family—and the court—to confront the moral and emotional weight of Kate's wish to die.

A flashback reveals the moment Anna discovered Kate's suicide attempt, hidden behind a locked door and fueled by alcohol and pills. Kate confesses her exhaustion with fighting her illness and her guilt over burdening the family, though she admits she lacks the courage to follow through. This memory underscores the sisters' complex bond, as Anna becomes the reluctant keeper of Kate's darkest secret. The scene poignantly contrasts their childhood innocence with the grim reality of their present struggles.

The chapter concludes with Anna recalling another pivotal moment when Kate subtly begged her not to donate a kidney, implicitly asking for death instead of prolonged suffering. As Anna's parents react with shock and grief in the courtroom, Campbell

steps in to mediate, emphasizing the legal and ethical stakes of Anna's testimony. The chapter leaves readers with a haunting question: Is Anna's compliance with Kate's wish an act of love or betrayal, and who truly has the right to decide Kate's fate?

WEDNESDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Judge DeSalvo organizing a visit to the hospital to speak with Kate, who is visibly frail but conscious. Kate engages in playful banter with Jesse, discussing hypothetical celebrity boxing matches, showcasing their close sibling bond. The mood shifts when Sara arrives with Anna and others, causing Kate to tense up. Judge DeSalvo requests a private conversation with Kate, hinting at the gravity of their discussion. Kate’s resigned remark, "it always comes back to me," foreshadows her central role in the family’s struggles, leaving Sara and the others to wait anxiously outside.

Sara reflects on the fragility of family and home, comparing their situation to a demolished house that was eventually rebuilt. This metaphor underscores the theme of resilience amid loss. Judge DeSalvo emerges from the meeting, announcing a closing at nine A.M., his demeanor suggesting unresolved tension. Campbell apologizes to Sara, and Anna expresses her need to see Kate, revealing the emotional weight of the situation. The family reunites in Kate’s room, where Anna’s tearful admission, "I tried," highlights her guilt and love, while Jesse lightens the mood with more playful questions.

The siblings’ interactions—balanced between humor and tenderness—paint a poignant picture of their bond. Brian kisses Kate goodnight, and Sara stays behind, overwhelmed by her daughter’s frailty. Kate’s aged eyes and thin arms symbolize her prolonged suffering, yet she remains emotionally strong. Sara’s internal monologue reveals her acceptance of life’s impermanence, acknowledging that parenthood is about cherishing moments, however brief. This realization underscores the chapter’s exploration of love, loss, and the inevitability of change.

In the final moments, Sara and Kate share a heartfelt exchange. Kate’s defiant "Don’t be [sorry]" and her assertion that her life was "a good one" demonstrate her

acceptance and courage. Sara, moved to tears, agrees, celebrating the joy Kate brought despite the hardships. The chapter closes with a powerful affirmation of their bond, leaving readers with a bittersweet reflection on family, resilience, and the enduring impact of love even in the face of impending loss.

THURSDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter opens with Campbell observing the rain through the apartment's plate glass wall, where his dog, Judge, whines at the falling drops. The weather triggers a nostalgic memory of watching raindrops on his father's car windshield, a moment that once frustrated him but now feels oddly mesmerizing. Despite knowing he should prepare for court, Campbell is drawn into the quiet contemplation of the rain, highlighting his internal conflict between duty and the desire to pause.

Julia interrupts his reverie, offering him the shower first, but Campbell deflects, joking about stepping onto the balcony instead. Their conversation about the weather feels superficial, masking deeper tensions. Campbell reflects on the upcoming court decision, acknowledging his efforts in the case involving Anna, a young woman who no longer appears indecisive or selfish but rather like anyone else searching for identity. His resignation to the inevitability of the outcome underscores the chapter's theme of unresolved endings.

The mood shifts as Julia sits beside Campbell and confesses her dislike for his apartment. Her observation prompts him to reassess his sterile, high-end living space, filled with expensive but impersonal decor. The apartment, much like Campbell's life, seems polished yet devoid of warmth, mirroring his emotional detachment. Julia's honesty acts as a catalyst for Campbell's own admission that he, too, dislikes the space, hinting at a deeper dissatisfaction with his lifestyle.

The chapter closes with Campbell's realization that his carefully curated environment fails to provide a sense of home. This moment of vulnerability with Julia suggests a potential turning point in their relationship and his self-awareness. The rain, the court case, and the apartment all serve as metaphors for Campbell's internal struggle—caught between perfection and authenticity, duty and desire, isolation and connection. The chapter leaves the reader anticipating whether he will confront these

tensions or continue to avoid them.

THURSDAY JESSE

The chapter opens with Jesse stepping out into the rain, immediately drenched as they begin walking through familiar surroundings, including an elementary school and intersections. The intensity of the downpour prompts Jesse to break into a run, pushing their physical limits until exhaustion forces them to collapse on a high school soccer field. This opening scene sets a tone of restlessness and desperation, with the rain serving as both a literal and metaphorical backdrop to Jesse's inner turmoil.

As Jesse lies on the soccer field, they recall a past experience of taking acid during a similar thunderstorm. The memory is vivid and surreal, with Jesse imagining the raindrops eroding their skin and yearning for a lightning strike to jolt them into feeling truly alive. This reflection reveals a deep longing for transformation or catharsis, hinting at a history of emotional numbness or dissatisfaction with life. The thunderstorm becomes a symbol of both danger and potential rebirth.

The chapter then shifts to Jesse's acknowledgment that the lightning—and the transformative moment they craved—never came, neither in the past nor in the present. This realization underscores a sense of disappointment or resignation, as Jesse's hope for a dramatic change remains unfulfilled. The absence of the lightning strike suggests a recurring theme of unmet expectations and the struggle to find meaning or excitement in life.

Finally, Jesse gets up, wipes the rain from their face, and resolves to devise a "better plan." This closing line implies a turning point, where Jesse moves from passive yearning to active decision-making. While the chapter leaves the nature of this plan ambiguous, it hints at Jesse's determination to take control of their life, marking a shift from despair to agency. The rain-soaked journey serves as a catalyst for this newfound resolve.

THURSDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with a vivid description of an intense rainstorm, evoking sensory details that immerse the reader in the scene. The rain is portrayed as relentless and overwhelming, likened to the sound of a running shower and heavy enough to trigger thoughts of biblical floods. The atmosphere is so oppressive that it invites the narrator—and by extension, the reader—to retreat to the comfort of a warm bed, as if seeking refuge from the storm's insistence on the passage of time.

The rain serves as more than just weather; it becomes a metaphor for inevitability and cyclical patterns. The narrator reflects on how water is in constant motion, mirroring life's unending cycles. Rain transforms into rivers, which flow into oceans, only to evaporate and return to the clouds, beginning the process anew. This observation underscores the chapter's thematic focus on the perpetual nature of existence, where endings are merely precursors to new beginnings.

A subtle yet poignant connection is drawn between the water cycle and human experience, particularly through the lens of childhood wisdom. The narrator notes that even a fourth grader understands water's endless journey, implying that this natural phenomenon is a universal truth. The comparison of evaporation to a soul ascending to the clouds adds a spiritual layer, suggesting that life, like water, is part of a larger, inescapable rhythm.

The chapter's tone is contemplative and almost meditative, blending natural imagery with existential musings. The rain acts as both a literal and symbolic force, grounding the reader in the present moment while also inviting deeper reflection on life's transient yet recurring nature. The prose is lyrical and evocative, capturing the beauty and melancholy of cyclical existence without resorting to overt sentimentality.

THURSDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with a vivid description of heavy rain, mirroring the weather on the day Anna was born. The narrator recalls how unseasonably warm it was on that New Year's Eve, with torrential downpours replacing expected snowfall. The abnormal weather disrupted ski slopes during the Christmas season, setting a chaotic yet memorable backdrop for Anna's birth. The narrator emphasizes the difficulty of driving to the hospital through the storm, with his wife Sara in labor beside him, unable to see clearly through the windshield.

As the narrative continues, the focus shifts to the emotional moment of Anna's arrival. The absence of stars due to the rain clouds becomes a poignant detail, symbolizing the obscured yet hopeful new beginning. The narrator suggests naming their daughter Andromeda, shortened to Anna, drawing inspiration from celestial mythology. Sara initially associates the name with a sci-fi book, but the narrator clarifies his reference to the princess in the night sky, highlighting a deeper, more personal significance.

The conversation between the narrator and Sara reveals layers of meaning behind the chosen name. Andromeda, as the narrator explains, is positioned in the sky between her mother and father, symbolizing unity and connection. This moment captures the tenderness and significance of naming their child, intertwining personal emotion with mythological imagery. The exchange underscores the couple's shared yet distinct perspectives, adding depth to their relationship and the chapter's emotional core.

The chapter concludes with this intimate scene, leaving a lasting impression of the bond between the parents and their newborn. The rain, initially a source of chaos, now serves as a backdrop to a moment of profound connection and meaning. The choice of Anna's name reflects both individuality and familial ties, encapsulating the chapter's themes of love, memory, and the interplay between nature and human experience. The narrative style remains evocative, blending personal recollection with universal

emotions.

THURSDAY SARA

The chapter opens with Sara Fitzgerald, a mother and former lawyer, nervously preparing to speak in court during a storm. She fumbles with her index cards, revealing her self-doubt about her abilities as both a legal professional and a parent. When prompted by the judge, she attempts to deliver a prepared legal argument but is interrupted by a crash of lightning, scattering her notes. This moment of chaos becomes a turning point as she abandons her scripted speech and instead addresses her daughter, Anna, directly, expressing her unconditional love and the complexities of motherhood.

Sara’s heartfelt monologue shifts the focus from legal technicalities to the emotional core of her dilemma. She admits her uncertainties as a mother, torn between her devotion to both her daughters—Anna and Kate, who is seriously ill. She reflects on the inherent unfairness of sibling relationships and the selfless, all-consuming nature of maternal love. Sara acknowledges her relentless pursuit of a cure for Kate, even if it means making difficult demands on Anna. Her speech underscores the tension between logic and emotion, as she grapples with the moral weight of her decisions while affirming her unwavering love for both children.

The narrative delves deeper into Sara’s internal conflict, as she questions the very nature of belief and choice. She admits her doubts about whether she is doing the right thing, even as she stands firm in her conviction to save Kate. Sara acknowledges that the lawsuit is not merely about a kidney donation but about autonomy and the illusion of solitary decision-making. She highlights the paradox of parental responsibility, where love compels actions that may seem unreasonable to others. Her raw honesty reveals the fragility of her position, caught between hope and guilt.

In the final paragraph, Sara addresses the courtroom with a powerful analogy: a parent’s obligation to save their child, even at great personal cost. She compares her

situation to sending one child into a burning building to save another, acknowledging the risks and moral ambiguities. Despite the legal and ethical questions, she asserts that her actions, however difficult, were ultimately right. The chapter closes with Sara sitting in silence as the rain continues, symbolizing the unresolved tension and emotional weight of her choices. Her journey encapsulates the profound sacrifices and unanswerable questions inherent in motherhood.

THURSDAY CAMPBELL

The chapter centers on a courtroom drama where the protagonist, likely a lawyer named Campbell, delivers a passionate argument about the autonomy of a 13-year-old girl, Anna, who is fighting for the right to make her own medical decisions. Campbell emphasizes that the case isn't just about donating a kidney to her sister Kate but about Anna's right to self-discovery and autonomy. He argues that even at her young age, Anna deserves the chance to determine her own future, and her voice should be the deciding factor in matters concerning her body. The speech challenges the traditional role of parents and society in making such weighty decisions for minors.

Judge DeSalvo's deliberation reveals the complexity of balancing the sanctity of life with the quality of life, particularly in cases where family members have conflicting medical needs. He reflects on his personal loss, acknowledging the Fitzgeralds' struggle to keep Kate alive while recognizing Anna's right to bodily autonomy. The judge concludes that no one is truly qualified to make such moral decisions for another, highlighting the blurred lines between ethics, love, and law. His ruling leans toward empowering Anna, emphasizing that age shouldn't negate her capacity to understand and make critical choices about her own health.

In a pivotal moment, Judge DeSalvo grants Anna medical emancipation, stripping her parents of the final say in her medical treatments while allowing them to retain other parental responsibilities. Campbell is appointed as her medical power of attorney, a role he accepts with humility. The judge's decision underscores the importance of consent and respect for individual agency, even in the face of familial and societal pressures. Anna's victory is portrayed as a triumph of personal autonomy over collective decision-making.

The chapter concludes with a touching scene where Anna, still in shock, is congratulated by Campbell and her family. The courtroom drama transitions into a

moment of quiet triumph, hinting at the emotional and ethical complexities that lie ahead. The narrative leaves readers pondering the broader implications of the ruling, questioning how society navigates the intersection of love, law, and personal freedom in matters of life and death.

THURSDAY ANNA

The chapter opens with Anna in a state of emotional and physical distress, trapped in a car during a heavy rainstorm. The weather mirrors her inner turmoil as she struggles with the aftermath of her medical emancipation, feeling suffocated by both the atmosphere and her own tears. Campbell, her companion, tries to reassure her that the rain is a blessing as it deters reporters, allowing her to reunite with her family in peace. Anna's vulnerability is palpable as she grapples with the weight of her newfound autonomy and the uncertainty of her identity.

Anna and Campbell engage in a candid conversation, revealing their dynamic. She questions Campbell about what she should do next, to which he responds by affirming her right to choose without imposing his own views. Their banter shifts to lighter topics, with Campbell humorously listing Anna's quirks, though his attempt to define her highlights her own confusion about who she is. The exchange underscores Anna's search for self amid the chaos of her life, while Campbell's evasive answers reflect his own complexities and priorities, such as his relationship with Julia.

The dialogue deepens as Anna probes Campbell about her future, seeking validation. He paints a vivid picture of her potential, suggesting she could achieve anything from breaking hearts to exploring the world. This moment of encouragement contrasts with Anna's earlier despair, offering a glimpse of hope. Her reflections on past aspirations—from ballerina to astronaut—reveal her ever-changing dreams, yet her ultimate desire remains constant: to be Kate's sister. This poignant admission underscores the centrality of family in her identity, even as she navigates personal uncertainty.

The chapter closes with Anna's quiet resolution, emphasizing her enduring bond with Kate. Despite the whirlwind of emotions and Campbell's attempts to distract or comfort her, Anna's focus returns to her sister. This highlights the chapter's central theme:

amid life's turbulence and the search for self, familial love remains her anchor. The interplay between humor, vulnerability, and hope creates a rich emotional tapestry, capturing Anna's complex journey toward self-discovery and connection.

THURSDAY BRIAN

The chapter opens with Brian, a first responder, being called away from his wife Kate's dialysis treatment to attend a severe motor vehicle accident at a dangerous intersection. Upon arrival, he finds a chaotic scene with two vehicles mangled together—a truck and a BMW. The BMW is crushed around the truck's front end, and Brian learns there are three injured individuals, one already en route to the hospital. As he assesses the situation, he collaborates with his colleague Red, who is using the Jaws of Life to extricate victims from the wreckage. The urgency and tension of the rescue operation are palpable as Brian navigates the treacherous terrain of shattered glass and twisted metal.

While attempting to reach the victims, Brian crawls over the truck and discovers his daughter Anna trapped in the BMW, her face pressed against the bloodied, shattered window. The realization sends him into a frenzy as he frantically works to free her and Campbell Alexander, another victim in the car. Despite his professional training, Brian's emotions overwhelm him as he tends to Anna, who is severely injured and unresponsive. The scene is fraught with desperation as Brian and the medical team perform CPR and administer shocks to stabilize her, racing against time to get her to the hospital.

At the hospital, Brian and his wife Sara are confronted with the devastating news that Anna has suffered a fatal head injury and is brain dead. The doctor explains that while a respirator is keeping her alive, there is no neurological activity. The family is faced with the agonizing decision of whether to donate Anna's organs, a question that compounds their grief. Meanwhile, Campbell Alexander, who has power of attorney over Anna, intervenes, emphasizing the urgency of donating her kidney to save another girl's life. The emotional weight of the situation is crushing, with Brian and Sara grappling with the loss of their daughter while being thrust into a moral and legal

dilemma.

The chapter concludes with a poignant reflection on the nature of binary stars—a metaphor for the intertwined fates of Anna and her sister Kate, who needs the kidney. The narrative underscores the cruel irony of the situation, where one sister's death could save the other's life. The gravity of the decision hangs heavily over the family, as Campbell's legal authority and the doctor's clinical explanation collide with Brian and Sara's raw grief. The chapter leaves readers with a sense of profound loss and the harsh realities of life-and-death choices.

THURSDAY SARA

The chapter opens with a poignant reflection on the inadequacy of language to describe the loss of a child, noting that while terms like "orphans" and "widows" exist, there is no word for a grieving parent. Sara, the narrator, prepares to say goodbye to her daughter Anna, who has been kept alive by machines after her organs were donated. The hallway is filled with loved ones and medical staff, all there to pay their respects. Sara and her husband, Brian, enter the room where Anna lies motionless, her body sustained only by technology, setting the stage for an emotionally wrenching moment.

Sara describes the surreal experience of seeing Anna's lifeless body, still warm to the touch but devoid of the vitality that once defined her. Overwhelmed by grief, she confesses her inability to cope, comparing the enormity of her sorrow to the impossibility of coloring the sky with a crayon. Brian comforts her, gently reminding her that Anna's essence is already gone—what remains is merely a shell. His words underscore the chapter's central theme: the distinction between the physical body and the spirit that animates it, a distinction Sara struggles to accept in her anguish.

As Sara and Brian brace themselves to turn off the respirator, they share a moment of mutual support, clinging to each other for strength. Sara observes the stark absence of life in Anna's face and muscles, a painful reminder of the irreversible loss. The narrative highlights the paradox of organ donation: Anna's body will give life to others, including her sister Kate, even as Sara grapples with the finality of her daughter's death. This bittersweet reality adds depth to the chapter's exploration of grief, sacrifice, and the complexities of letting go.

In the final moments, Sara places her hand on Anna's chest as Brian switches off the machine. She describes the visceral sensation of Anna's heartbeat fading beneath her palm, a fleeting yet profound experience of "utter loss." The chapter closes with Sara's

quiet acceptance, marked by the hollow calm that follows the cessation of life. This powerful conclusion encapsulates the chapter's emotional journey, from denial and despair to a fragile, heartbreaking resolution.

KATE

The chapter explores the profound and lingering grief experienced by a family after the loss of Anna, a beloved daughter and sister. The narrator reflects on the absence of rules for mourning, describing how each family member copes differently: the father sees Anna in constellations, the mother searches for signs of her presence, and the narrator blames herself for Anna's death. The pain is raw and unrelenting, disrupting daily life and leaving the family emotionally fractured. The narrator's guilt is compounded by her survival, as she believes Anna's death allowed her to recover from a life-threatening illness.

Over time, the family begins to tentatively reengage with life, though grief remains a constant undercurrent. Small acts—like grocery shopping or laughing at a TV show—feel like betrayals at first, but gradually become moments of healing. Jesse, a supportive figure, helps the narrator realize that joy can coexist with loss. The chapter poignantly illustrates how grief evolves, likening it to a tide that slowly erodes pain, even as memories of Anna persist in everyday moments and relationships.

The narrator wonders if Anna is aware of their lives post-loss, reflecting on milestones like Jesse's career achievements and her father's struggle with alcoholism. She also shares tender memories, such as discovering an old photo of Anna, which becomes a sacred relic. The family's connection to Anna remains strong, though it is often painful, as seen in their strained relationship with Campbell and Julia, whose presence reminds them of their loss. The narrator's work as a dance teacher keeps Anna's memory alive, as she sees their shared childhood in her students.

Ultimately, the narrator carries Anna with her, both physically and emotionally. Her scar serves as a tangible reminder of Anna's sacrifice, and she treasures the parts of Anna that live on within her. The chapter captures the duality of grief—how it can be both a burden and a connection, a wound and a testament to love. The family's

journey shows that while loss never fully disappears, it can transform into a quieter, enduring presence over time.