

In blackness we see the strike of a match. A young man in his mid thirties stands lighting six candles. After lighting the last candle he turns to the audience and begins to speak.

HUNTER

Every so often I light candles in remembrance of those I've lost. Allowing there faces and voices and moments we shared to come back to me. (Pause) Death is a very odd entity. It is the one commonality that links us all, regardless of race or religion. Rather you believe in Christ, Allah, Buddha or nobody, your still going to die. The first death I ever experienced was my grandmothers. I was about ten. It didn't scare me to go up to her casket and see her. But it hurt. A hurt I didn't understand. A hurt that ran deep. I remember my cousin Celeste and I bet each other we wouldn't cry. Both of us lost that bet. (Pause) As you grow older you think you'd understand death more. I've only grown to understand it as something for which we have no control.

DAVID

I told you that.

A young man.

HUNTER

I remember. Cannon beach.

DAVID

My birthday. You and Derdra took me there. Making me and my shot-to-hell immune system walk half a mile to the beach just to fly a stupid kite.

HUNTER

You didn't look too good.

DAVID

Considering at the time I was alive about four years beyond what my doctor told me to expect, I thought I looked pretty damn good.

HUNTER

True.

DAVID

Do you remember what I said to you while we were sitting there on the beach that day?

HUNTER

That you never thought you'd see Cannon beach again.

DAVID

And that it was my favorite place.

HUNTER

We wanted you to have a good birthday.

DAVID

And I did. It was a great day!

Light fades on David.

HUNTER

It was. He sent Derdra and I a picture of him blowing out the candles on his birthday cake that day. On the back it read "That's it. Let the sick guy spit all over the cake". I miss his humor. On the day that David died, a friend gave him the message that Derdra and I sent our love. She said he smiled.

Hunter blows out one candle.

HUNTER

Richard Toma was a man that left such an impact on my life. I met him in the first year of the conservatory. He was my teacher, mentor and friend.

TOMA

Go with that. Tell me what you mean.

HUNTER

You allowed all of us to discover our own creativity.

TOMA

It was there all the time.

HUNTER

I know. But you had a way of stripping back all the fear of failure and inhibition.

TOMA

We all fail. And who gives a shit what other people think. It's what you think and what you feel that's important. Your own experiences not someone else's. There is where your creativity lies. If you can't get to it and look at it, how will you ever be able to understand it and express it.

HUNTER

God I miss you Richard. Your input. Your energy, your creativity. Your outlook.

TOMA

I'm still here. I'm a part of you. Your energy, your creativity, your outlook.

HUNTER

I feel that. It's just that it hurts.

TOMA

That's good. Go with that.

Light fades on Toma.

HUNTER

This man impacted thousands of lives throughout the world with his art and creativity. Having the opportunity to work with him and knowing I was a good friend, someone whom he listened to, still awes me to this day.

Hunter blows out one candle.

HUNTER

Maybe what hurts so much when someone you know dies, is the incompleteness.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

All the things you didn't get to say or do. I wrote one time that if we could stop the memories we could stop the pain. But who would want no memories. So, we take the bad with the good. (Pause) When my father died what hurt so much was that I really never knew him. He worked overseas except the last few years. Growing up he would come home every few years with presents and stories from exotic places.

FATHER

You didn't like my stories and presents?

HUNTER

I loved them. I just wish I could have experienced some of them with you.

FATHER

I wish that too.

HUNTER

I think you were very comfortable with having your family in your wallet.

FATHER

How can you say that to me. I loved you. I provided very well for you.

HUNTER

I'm very thankful for that. I just...I just wanted a father. I wanted you.

FATHER

I wanted that too.

HUNTER

I know. But by the time you wanted that, I was a grown man.

FATHER

I know.

HUNTER

I do miss you. I just would have liked to have had the chance to be your son and you my father.

FATHER

I'm sorry.

HUNTER

It's okay.

FATHER

Be that for your kids.

HUNTER

I will.

Light fades on Father. Hunter blows out the candle.

HUNTER

I've never understood people who take their own life. I feel our time here is short enough as it is why would I want to shorten it even more. I do think its your right however. Better then these idiots who take a bunch of people with them. I had a friend in high school, Dennis Milks, who killed himself. He hung himself over the Jacuzzi at the Newport Beach Tennis Club. The symbolism for which I've never understood. He was only nineteen. I think now of how sad it must have been, to not see any future for yourself at such a young age. You wonder why death comes in so many ways. I believe god has given us all a path. It still does not explain the reason why certain people who live their whole lives as a good person, with strong beliefs, doing the right thing, never hurting others, get stricken down in their prime.

CELESTE

It's okay.

HUNTER

I don't understand it.

CELESTE

I know.

HUNTER

You were only twenty nine, newly married.

CELESTE

I miss Jimmy.

HUNTER

He is struggling Celeste, struggling to understand why God did this. Why you were put through so much pain.

CELESTE

I'm no longer in pain.

HUNTER

I know that. But I must say it makes me question God. You were such a good person. Such a good person. And you never questioned or lost your belief.

CELESTE

Do you remember the last time you saw me?

HUNTER

Of course.

CELESTE

I had lost all my hair from the chemo. And the minute you saw me you remember what you said?

HUNTER

I told you, you looked beautiful.

CELESTE

That meant so much to me.

HUNTER

You did look beautiful. You had this calm sureness that was so radiant. There is hardly a day that goes by, that I don't think of you. Your smile, your laugh. I think often of us playing together as kids. That was such a safe time.

CELESTE
You remember our bet at grandma's
funeral?

HUNTER
Yeah. We both lost.

CELESTE
Stay in Jimmy's life for me.

HUNTER
You know I will.

CELESTE
I love you Hunter.

HUNTER
I love you.

Light fades on Celeste.

HUNTER
She died quietly, with Jimmy at her
side. I was asked to read a
passage at her funeral. The
passage was marked with a book mark
written to me by her. The funeral
precession was over two miles long.
Strange what you choose to
remember.

Hunter blows out one candle.

HUNTER
One of the hardest deaths was that
of my mother. She had survived two
other separate forms of cancer
before the third took her life.
Watching someone you love, slip
away more and more on a daily bases
is the hardest.

MOM
I'm glade to see you've moved on
with your life.

HUNTER
Had to you know.

MOM
And I couldn't be there to comfort
you.

HUNTER

Don't tell me. Cause you're dead?

MOM

Exactly! I'm glade you've come to grips with that.

HUNTER

I miss our conversations.

MOM

You mean our arguments.

HUNTER

Those too.

MOM

I'm glade to see you writing again.

HUNTER

Thanks.

MOM

Please start writing comedies again. And your father says a little less profanity.

HUNTER

Okay.

MOM

I Love you Hunter.

HUNTER

I love you too.

Light fades on MOM.

HUNTER

The hardest thing I ever experienced was sitting in that room just her and I and the doctor, when she asked him if she was going to die. And he looked at her, his eyes began to fill and he said "yes". I remember driving her home, the word "yes" ringing through my heart. Then out of know where she blurted, "Damn it, I just bought summer shoes". I put my hand on hers and I told her I loved her.

We found those summer shoes, still in the box, and we made sure she got to wear them. What really hit me after she was gone, and the fog somewhat cleared, was that I was no longer ever going to be the child again. I could never go home and climb into that comfortable protective relationship of child and parent. It, like both my parents, was gone.

Hunter blows out a candle.

HUNTER

There is not a lot I've come away knowing about death. I only know it's important to remember those who have crossed our paths. Be it husband, wife, parent, child, brother, sister or friend. There is a strange healing that takes place in the remembrance. I don't think the pain of the loss will ever stop. But we shouldn't let that pain stop us from remembering. In keeping with that. I'd like to say Uncle Al, Aunt Peg, Aunt Janet, Uncle Bud, Uncle Jimmy, Kavanaugh, Kneeland, Ed, Kevin, James, Boone, Mrs. C, Paul, Lauri, Bob, Derek, Leon, Steve and Robin. I remember.

Hunter blows out the last candle.

Lights fade.