

I AM NOT OKAY WITH THIS

Written by

Jonathan Entwistle and Christy Hall

Based on the graphic novel  
"I AM NOT OKAY WITH THIS"  
by Charles Forsman

PILOT DRAFT  
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**OVER BLACK**

The terrified, heated breath of a MAN, 40's, rises in the darkness in a horrified whisper-

MAN (V.O.)  
They're *coming*...

**EXT. PENNSYLVANIA FOREST, LATE WINTER (FLASH-FORWARD) - DAY**

A TEENAGE GIRL - in combat boots, skinny jeans and an unzipped, oversized coat - sprints through a foot of powdered snow, PANTING as she flees.

The air a mixture of falling snow and glowing blue and orange embers. This dance of ice and flame would be totally weird were it not for the forest fire that rages in the background.

- Her limbs are long and lean.

- Her brunette bangs cling to the beaded sweat of her forehead.

- Her brooding stare the kind only a female adolescent can conjure.

This is SYDNEY. She is 17.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Dear Diary...

Around her neck, U.S. Marine issued dog tags TAP, TAP, TAP against her chest as she runs.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Go *fuck* yourself.

In the background, the structure of an old water tower relents to the flames with a GROAN and a CRASH!

TITLE CARD: **I AM NOT OKAY WITH THIS**

**EXT. BRADDOCK HIGH, EARLY WINTER (PRESENT) - DAY**

Stepping from a school bus that's seen better days, we come face to face with Sydney again dawning a glazed expression (her stoic boredom the polar *opposite* of the ignited intensity we've just witnessed).

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Just kidding. I don't know what to write in this stupid thing.

Backpack drooping from one shoulder, Syd makes her way up the front lawn and through the glass doors of the high school.

**INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, HALLWAY - DAY**

Flanked by lockers, Sydney weaves her way through a sea of SCHOOLMATES during that frenzied rush between classes.

                    SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 Anyway... hi. My name is Sydney.  
 I'm a boring seventeen-year-old,  
 white girl.

**INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, COUNSELOR CAPPRIOTTI'S OFFICE - DAY**

The jolly-vibes of our guidance counselor, MS. CAPPRIOTTI, 50's, slides a journal across her desk toward Sydney who sits slumped in a chair, one of her legs slung over the armrest.

                    SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 Ms. Cappriotti made me promise to  
 do this.

                    MS. CAPPRIOTTI  
 Promise you'll do this, huh?

                    SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 She said it might help with my  
 moods.

                    MS. CAPPRIOTTI  
 It might help with your moods.

                    SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 Lately... I keep losing my temper.  
 I don't want to. But it just spills  
 out.

**QUICK FLASHES OF SYDNEY'S EXPLOSIVE "MOOD SWINGS":**

**A) INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, MATH CLASS - DAY**

*Out of nowhere*, Sydney (without bangs) angrily breaks her pencil in two. SNAP!

**B) EXT. BRADDOCK HIGH, SCHOOL YARD - DAY**

*Out of nowhere*, Sydney (without bangs) kicks over a trash can. WHAM!

## C) INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, HOME ECONOMICS - DAY

*Out of nowhere*, Sydney ceases cutting a sewing pattern, grabs her hair and chops bangs for herself in one SNIP!

## BACK TO SCENE

With an air of distrust, Sydney glares at the journal.

SYDNEY

(dryly)

So... I'm supposed to write *what* now, I don't get it.

MS. CAPPRIOTTI

Anything. Everything. Whatever comes to mind. Think of it like... you're just talking to yourself. No one will ever read it but you.

SYDNEY

Can't I just... use my phone?

MS. CAPPRIOTTI

Your phone'll be *distracting*, don't ya think? I'd like you to have something a little more... *therapeutic*.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I really doubt therapy can fix... whatever the hell's going on inside me.

Still not convinced, Sydney takes the journal into her hands, the cover obnoxiously youthful, depicting a wide-eyed kitty-cat with wings and a mermaid tale, covered in glitter.

MS. CAPPRIOTTI

You're a good kid, Sydney. You're simply... *adjusting*. And that takes time. And a little *help*.

Sydney observes Ms. Cappriotti, a large woman with long hair, no makeup, wearing layers of colorful cotton as if she might be heading to Burning Man as soon as the next bell rings.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I mean... she's pretty alright for a guidance counselor, *I guess*. Even if she does smell like an old hippie.

## INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, GIRLS' BATHROOM, STALL - DAY

Locked in a bathroom stall, Sydney continues her first diary entry, huddled sideways on the porcelain stool, her back against the graffitied wall, her feet propped up on the hanging roll of toilet paper.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Anyway... I pretty much hate school. I just...

## INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, CAFETERIA - DAY

Each stop down the assembly line, a few CAFETERIA ATTENDANTS in hair nets and latex gloves slop scoops of mashed potatoes, corn, green beans and an indiscernible meat substance on Sydney's tray. *Disgusting.*

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I hate being stuck here alllllll day. Day after day. Feels like a cage or something.

## INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, BIOLOGY CLASS - DAY

Up front, a painfully boring biology teacher, MR. FILE, 40's, leads a lesson on basic sex education with a slideshow of intriguing diagrams, though his bland delivery makes it about as fun as a grocery list.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Or *maybe...* it's more of a *prison*. And all that's missing are the bright orange jumpsuits.

MR. FILE

-blood reaches the penis, and gets *trapped* within the *corpora cavernosa*. The penis expands and-

With a look of contempt, she glances a few rows back at BRADLEY LEWIS, 18.

MR. FILE (CONT'D)

-that is how a Homosapian male is able to hold an erection.

Suddenly, Brad raises his hand.

BRAD

(as if a serious observation)

From *my* experience, Mr. File, the *holding* of an erection is far more successful in the *hands* of a Homosapian *female*.

The room erupts with laughter.

MR. FILE  
(deadpan)  
Very funny, Mr. Lewis.

BRAD  
Just talking *science*.

MR. FILE  
Moving on.

Hardly a disciplinarian, Mr. File flips to his next diagram, droning on. The only one who didn't laugh at his joke, Brad has noted, was Sydney. He glares at her with a smug expression. She pretends not to notice. Meanwhile-

MR. FILE (CONT'D)  
When a *female* is sexually excited there's *also* an increase in blood flow to the genitals, causing the vulva and clitoris to swell.

BRAD  
(a whisper to Sydney)  
Oh, come on. *Laugh*, Skeletor, that was funny.

MR. FILE (CONT'D)  
This is the moment the vagina lubricates itself.

#### INT. BRADDOCK HIGH, GYM - DAY

After school, Sydney sits in the bleachers half journalling, half watching the rather intense basketball practice before her. The point guard, DINA, 18, the most talented among them, runs the ball down the court.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
My best friend's Dina. She's a Senior and such a badass. I'm basically *one* grade and *seven* social spheres below Dina, so normally, I don't think she'd choose me as a friend, but... we both moved here around the same time. Both the *new kids* in town, ya know, so... I guess I lucked out.

Dina and her teammates pass the ball around with it ending up back with Dina at the top of the key.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Compared to her... I'm not really good at anything.  
(MORE)

SYDNEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I never have been. Like. I'm not  
*special* is what I'm trying to say.

Dina shoots a perfect three and throws Sydney a thumbs-up as she hustles back down the court.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
And, *I'm okay with that*. I mean...  
I guess I *have* to be.

**EXT. DARRELL'S DINER, FRONT PARKING LOT - DAY**

Walking toward the diner, arm in arm, Sydney and Dina giggle wildly, dramatically singing their very favorite song, "Hooked on a Feeling."

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Before Dina, I mostly just kept to myself. I'm not the kind of person that likes attention really. But. Dina's so happy and pretty and loud and funny. Like. The first time we hung out, she took me to Rock 'N Bowl, and flirted with the DJ.

Playfully breaking into their own choreography, the two begin to dance around the frozen, mostly vacant parking lot as if starring in a Broadway show.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
She got him to play "Hooked on a Feeling," like, twenty times while we danced. It annoyed the shit out of everyone, it was so great.

The two swing around a couple lamp posts, "Singing in the Rain" style, complete with synchronized dance moves.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
When I'm around Dina... I suddenly don't hate having fun. I actually kinda like it.

The big finale: Cue jazz hands and... ROARING LAUGHTER.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
I've never had a best friend before.

## INT. DARRELL'S DINER - DAY

Entering the modest, wood-paneled diner, Sydney and Dina approach a booth where Brad chows down on a plate of fries.

DINA

Hey, baby, sorry we're late.

Leaning in, Dina kisses Brad, his hand on her ass, Sydney looking like she might actually vomit.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Anyway... for whatever reason, this summer, out of nowhere, Dina started dating *Bradly Lewis*.

BRAD

All good, babe. Jump in, have some fries.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

He's our high school's super cool jock or *epic* douchebag, depending on your affiliation.

Begrudgingly, Sydney sits across from them, watching Brad continue to chomp on a mouthful of fried potatoes.

BRAD

Yo. *Syd*.

SYDNEY

(dryly)  
Bradley.

BRAD

Make your mom hook us up with some burgers.

Expressionless, Sydney simply stares at Brad.

SYDNEY

She only works *nights*, dickhole.

BRAD

*Still*. You gotta have an *in*.

SYDNEY

Maybe. Maybe not. But *probably*.

With a grin, Dina mouths to Sydney, "*You're a dick.*" Sydney mouths back, "*He's a dick!*"



Anytime these friends mouth to one another, everyone else remains oblivious and the exchange is supported by **SUBTITLES**.

DINA

Brad, you wanna burger, buy  
*yourself* a damn burger, cheap ass.

Brad simply laughs an annoying, open-mouthed laugh showcasing a wad of what is now *mashed* potatoes on his tongue.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Ug. He's supposed to be a Senior this year, but got held back. Now he's in my friggin' class and dating my friggin' best friend.

Without much thought, Sydney's eyes glance down at Dina's cleavage. Unfortunately, Brad notices.

BRAD

Hey, Dyke! Stop looking at my girlfriend's tits!

Syd mouths to Dina, "Wow."

SYDNEY

(so not impressed)

Yup. Thanks, Brad. That makes it, what- the *billionth* time you've called me that?

Smacking him on the shoulder-

DINA

Leave her alone, seriously.

BRAD

Can't say I blame ya, Syd! They are some nice-ass-titties!

Brad sticks his face in Dina's cleavage and zerberts her skin loudly, causing Dina to giggle and squirm.

DINA

Stop! You are such an *asshole*!

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Uuuuuggggg... It makes me sick to my stomach, them together.

Watching them, Sydney studies the details of Dina's neck, her explosive smile, the way her hair falls *just so*.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

He's gonna take her away... I can  
already feel it. And where does  
that leave *me*?

We cut back to Sydney with a scowl, intense hatred flushing  
red across her face.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

It makes me wonder... what the  
inside of Brad's head looks like.

Laughing, Brad turns his gaze back to Sydney, and suddenly -  
**HIS HEAD EXPLODES.**

Blood, brains and everything in between, splatters up the  
window, across the booth, into the fries... covering Dina and  
Sydney in a pink goo.

We stay on Sydney, her face splattered with blood. She  
remains emotionless.

We cut from Sydney to Brad and Dina... *He's still alive.*

We cut back to Sydney... *No blood.*

Then, after taking a sip of his shake, Brad grabs at his  
head, suddenly suffering an intense migraine.

BRAD

AH! *Fuck.*

DINA

You okay?

Rubbing at his temples, his eyes closed tightly shut-

BRAD

No, I'm not okay.

This catches Sydney - "*WTF just happened?*"

DINA

(with concern)

What is it? Brain freeze, or...?

BRAD

Yeah... just... give me a minute.

Dumbstruck by what has just happened-

SYDNEY

Hey... I'm gonna take off.

DINA

Okay. Need a ride?

SYDNEY

Nah, I'm good. Text ya later.

Regarding Brad's behavior, Dina mouths to Sydney, "Sorry."  
Sydney shrugs, "It's cool."

On her way out of the diner - still rattled by the Brad coincidence - Sydney suddenly suffers an **ABSTRACT FLASH**, through the colored haze - a man's hand reaching out towards her again...

**BACK TO SCENE**

Collecting herself, Syd opens the door and launches out into the parking lot.

**EXT. BRADDOCK, PENNSYLVANIA, VARIOUS - DUSK**

As Sydney walks through town, we catch various glimpses of Braddock, Pennsylvania. A borough located in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh along the Monongahela River. An industrial town of roughly two thousand. A place that might have been considered "quaint" with its row houses, front porches and red-brick buildings had the vast majority of it not been boarded up and left rotting. Meanwhile-

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Anyway... I moved to Pennsylvania two years ago. And not, like, a cute part of Pennsylvania either, with corn and cabbage and shit. It's more like... power plants and junk. Like. My town's won the grand prize for most polluted air in America for, like, a bunch of years in a row now, so... yippee.

**EXT. ROAD ON EDGE OF TOWN - DUSK**

Along a sleepy road, Sydney continues home on foot, flanked by wastelands, pine trees and abandoned industrial buildings rusting in the snow. It could easily feel eerie out here, if it wasn't so damn beautiful.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

My family... I guess we've never had a lot of money.

(MORE)

SYDNEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Like, every place we move, and we've moved a lot, we always end up in some place like this.

The only soul in sight, she passes over an old train track, the heat of her breath billowing white in the cold.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I mean. I guess I should be grateful or whatever. Some have even less than I do. It's like a lottery, I guess. Some kids win big time the moment they're born.

Sydney stops in her tracks, looking up into the sky, thoughtfully watching as a beautiful BROWN OWL suddenly swoops and circles mesmerizingly overhead. Weird. But cool.

**EXT. SYDNEY'S ROAD, NEAR STANLEY'S HOUSE - DUSK**

Almost home, Sydney kicks at the crumbling sidewalk of her low income neighborhood.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

The rest of us? We're all stuck with scratch-offs and bottle caps and shit. Best we can hope for, most days, is a can of free soda. Woop-eeeeee! Aspartame! Mmmmmmm! *Delicious!* I mean, really, what are the friggin' odds that-

STANLEY (O.S.)

Hey, Syd!

STANLEY BARBER, 16, scrambles up from a frayed lawn chair on his porch.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I guess I should tell you about Stanley Barber. He lives just down the street from me.

SYDNEY

Hey.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Where I find myself feeling pretty shitty about my low social ranking-

He awkwardly meets her on the cold sidewalk. *Barefoot.*

STANLEY

What'cha up to?

SYDNEY (V.O.)

But! Behold, the master of zero fucks. Especially when it comes to his own social status...

SYDNEY

Just... goin' home.

Stanley perches the old, dime-store, plastic sunglasses he's wearing up on the top of his head.

STANLEY

Can I... Mind if I walk with you?

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Sometimes I think he has a crush on me.

SYDNEY

'Kay.

The exact opposite of Brad, Stan is our modern-day Anthony Michael Hall, our Eric Forman from *That '70s Show* when he's trying to play it cool. He's the geek who is not cool, only he is cool by being uncool... make sense?

As they walk a block in the awkward silence, she nonchalantly takes note of:

- The cheap plastic sunglasses nested in his coarse, curly hair that desperately needs a trim.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

And then. Other times, I wonder if I'm confusing him having a crush...

- His bad, 1990s, pleated khaki pants from Goodwill.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

...with him just being weird.

- The tragic way he's tip-toeing around the painful crumbles of cement that are so clearly jabbing at his cold, bare feet.

SYDNEY

You okay?

Looking down at his bare feet-

STANLEY

Shoes... Who needs 'em anyway?

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
Yeah. It's not a crush.

They walk again in *silence* for an awkward beat. Suddenly-

STANLEY  
So. *Bloodwitch*. Am-I-right?

SYDNEY  
What?

STANLEY  
*Bloodwitch*. You like their music?

SYDNEY  
Oh. Uh... I've never heard of 'em.

STANLEY  
They're... perfect!

SYDNEY  
Cool. Send it to me.

STANLEY  
Yeah. I will.

Yet another awkward silence. Then-

STANLEY (CONT'D)  
Or... maybe... you could come over and listen to it? I mean, I've got it on vinyl... limited edition, gatefold and stuff. And... we can, like... get high.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
I've never been high before. I've always been a little too scared to try.

SYDNEY  
(a surprised chuckle)  
What about your dad?

STANLEY  
(a shrug)  
He's never around.

Sydney slows to a stop, thinking.

STANLEY (CONT'D)  
Or... you don't have to, I don't care.

Sydney studies him again. Somehow Stanley doesn't have any air of creepiness or arrogance to him at all, simply a slightly awkward self-confidence that is well beyond his years. An old soul. The kind that is baffling in high school.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Just... think it could be cool to hang out, ya know? We've never really hung out before.

Reversely, it seems that Stanley recognizes something kindred in Sydney, you can see it in his eyes.

SYDNEY

(hesitantly)

Yeah... I guess we haven't.

STANLEY

It's cool. No worries. Let me know.

Theatrically turning to leave, he looks up at the gloomy winter sky, puts his sunglasses on...

STANLEY (CONT'D)

What a world we live in, Sydney!

He exhales, like an awkward dad. And literally dances off back toward his house - It's part 'Tap', part 'Broadway' and loveably oddball.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, ENTRY - NIGHT**

As she enters her modest, suburban house, a place that's a little beat up just like the rest of town, and messy, too -

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I live with my mom and little brother.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Sydney?! That you?!

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Mom and me haven't been getting along lately.

Throwing down her backpack--

SYDNEY

(extreme sarcasm)

Nope, it's an ax murderer, good thing you asked.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
Have you seen my-?!

Entering the-

INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

-Kitchen, Sydney finds her mom, MAGGIE, a tired woman in her early 40's, in a pink diner outfit, desperately searching the laundry hamper, her nerves frayed.

SYDNEY  
Your... what?

MAGGIE  
Stockings.

SYDNEY  
*Stockings?*

MAGGIE  
They were drying!

SYDNEY  
Don't you mean *pantyhose*?

MAGGIE  
*Sydney!* I'm gonna be late!

Still searching-

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
They were in the bathroom, they were... hanging over the shower curtain.

SYDNEY  
Oh. *Sorry*. I thought they were dirty.

MAGGIE  
They were *drying!*

SYDNEY  
Well, I found 'em in the bathtub, so...

MAGGIE  
Where are they, they're my last pair?!

SYDNEY  
I sorta... washed 'em.



MAGGIE  
In the washer?!

Beyond irritated, Maggie bee-lines to the-

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, NARROW HALLWAY - NIGHT**

-Washing machine nestled inside a small closet within a narrow hallway. Following her, hesitant to confess-

SYDNEY  
Yeah, and then... I guess they sorta ended up in the dryer.

MAGGIE  
Oh, great.

Falling to her knees, Maggie empties the dryer, throwing a load of clean clothes all over the ground, rescuing her one pair of pantyhose.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Now I get to *feel* like sausage while I'm *servicing* it.

She hurries to the-

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

-Living room, flops onto a faded couch and angrily forces her legs into a pair of stubborn *shrunken* stockings. Again, Sydney follows, trying her best to ease the situation.

SYDNEY  
I mean... you don't really have to wear 'em, do ya? *No one* wears 'em anymore. Like. *Since the 90s*.

MAGGIE  
Says the rail thin girl who did not inherit my thighs!

Pulling up the pantyhose, Maggie lifts her diner dress snapping the nylon upon her waist. Smoothing her dress back down, Maggie slides on the white, nurse-grade, orthopedic shoes waiting next to the door and grabs her purse. Opening the door-

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Liam's in his room. Make sure he does his homework and eats some dinner.

SYDNEY

(a sigh)

Isn't he old enough to make sure himself?

MAGGIE

Sydney! Can you just-! Do something, *anything*, just once, for me, without *questioning*?!

SYDNEY

(plainly)

And here I thought I was being so charming.

SLAM! goes the front door, Maggie marching to her piece of shit car. Sydney watches her from the window.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

It's stupid to fight about pantyhose. But it really doesn't matter what we're talking about. Mom and I could sit in silence for the rest of our lives and she'd *still* annoy the crap outta me. And I'd *still* be a bitter disappointment to *her*, so... Yay. At least we *both* think we got a bum deal in the *family* department.

KNOCK, KNOCK.

INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, LIAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cracking the door open, Sydney finds LIAM, 10, planted stomach-down on the stained carpet, surrounded by open comic books and coloring something in a sketchpad.

SYDNEY

Hey, Goober, ya done your homework yet?

His room bursting with a wide spectrum of youthful "DIY" projects, all in various stages of development, Liam radiates a kinetic sort of wonder. The kind of genuine "go" at life that tends to fade after puberty. Also, he's a bit on the *chubby* side, a fact that doesn't seem to bother him in the least. It's actually super cute.

LIAM  
 Hours ago. Soon as I got home.  
 (with a sly grin, knowing  
 the answer)  
 What about you?

Curling up on the floor next to him-

SYDNEY  
 Uh... I'll get to it.

LIAM  
 Mom says you have to work hard,  
 Syd, if you're gonna succeed.

SYDNEY  
 Yeah, well, see... the *plan's*  
 always been to sit back and watch  
 you succeed, Goob. Who knows...  
 maybe one day, if you *reeeeally*  
 work hard enough, you'll get to be  
 the one to pay for my funeral.

LIAM  
 You're so weird.

Liam laughs, shaking his head.

SYDNEY  
 How was school today?

LIAM  
 Richard Rynard punched Toby Gardner  
 in the nose. He got sent to Mr.  
 Coffee's office.

SYDNEY  
 Oh, yeah?

LIAM  
 Yeah. And. I think I might be next,  
 so...

Finally, Liam looks up-

LIAM (CONT'D)  
 I'm devising a *plan*.

Excited, Liam reveals what he's been coloring.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
 Check this out.

The sketch reveals an image of Liam in what looks to be a super hero outfit, the kind in the comics splayed before him, but one of his own design. It's actually pretty cool.

SYDNEY

Holy shit, Goob! Is that you?

LIAM

(proudly nodding)

Yup. Designed it myself.  
Breastplate, shinguards, spike  
gloves. Not sure about the helmet  
situation just yet, 'cause... I  
don't want to block my peripherals.  
*Just in case.*

SYDNEY

That is really cool, man. Some of  
your best work yet.

LIAM

I mean... it's basically my Mark  
One, and your first suit's always  
the hardest to figure out, so...  
it's still in progress.

SYDNEY

(mildly confused)

And... sorry... *what's* the plan  
again?

LIAM

(with utmost sincerity)

I'm gonna build this suit. And kick  
Richard Rynard's ass... and avenge  
Toby Gardner.

**INT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT**

Sydney and Liam check out the glory of the "nutritious," pre-made food section, Liam hungrily eyeing the rotating hotdogs.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Most nights, I make us mac-n-  
cheese, but... every once in a  
while... Liam offers up a few bucks  
for us to grab some dinner  
someplace else.

Sydney and Liam pile the check out counter with two hotdogs, a bag of chips and a couple candy bars. A male CASHIER, 50s, rings them up, shoulders hunched over, *so over his job.*

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 I have no idea where the money  
 comes from. We don't get allowance  
 or anything.

Sydney watches her little brother pull a few bucks from his own, homemade, duct tape wallet, attached to his jeans by a chain made from paper clips.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 In some ways... I don't really want  
 to know. It's like... his super  
 power or something.

**EXT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT**

Sitting outside, huddling a little from the cold, Liam and Sydney eat their hot dogs together on the curb.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 We always get hot dogs. They're not  
 bad.

She stares at Liam's shoes. Both untied.

SYDNEY  
 (softly)  
 Liam?

LIAM  
 Yeah?

She opens her mouth to say something more, but... instead suffers another couple of **FLASHES**:

- Her hand reaching toward the man's hand, their fingers touching.

- His pained face, obscured and abstract.

**BACK TO SCENE**

This image catching in her throat, Sydney decides against whatever she was about to say. Instead---

SYDNEY  
 (plainly)  
 If Richard Rynard ever touches  
 you... ya know... before you get  
 your suit built and kick *his* ass...  
 I'll pull his throat out, with my  
 bare hands, right in front of Mr.  
 Coffee.

LIAM  
 (eyes widening with  
 wonder)  
 Seriously?

SYDNEY  
 Yeah. Like this-!

Sydney squishes the hotdog in her hand, the ketchup spraying out like blood - exaggerated, Kung Fu movie style, complete with her own sound effects, of course.

Again, Liam laughs, shaking his head.

LIAM  
 You are *seriously* so weird.

Nudging him, with a grin-

SYDNEY  
 Yeah. I know.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Soaking in a bath, Sydney watches the DRIP, DRIP, DRIP of the leaking faucet with annoyance. Lifting her toe from the warm water, she attempts to plug the hole, but the water continues trickling down. She pulls her toe away. DRIP, DRIP, DRIP.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER)**

Her hair wet from the bath, Sydney stands in front of a mirror wearing a long t-shirt for pajamas, popping the zits on her outer thighs.

DRIP, DRIP, DRIP goes the faucet, loudly in the background.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 So... lately... I started getting these zits on my thighs, I am straight-up disgusting.

DRIP, DRIP, DRIP.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 I've tried zit cream and soap and all sorts of junk. Nothing helps.

DRIP, DRIP, DRIP.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

They're not even that much fun to  
pop.

Irritated, Sydney yells at the faucet from over her shoulder.

SYDNEY

Uuuugggg, *stop!*

Immediately, the DRIPPING sound stops. Sydney turns back to the bathtub. The water has indeed stopped leaking, as if having obeyed her command. Again - *WTF?!*

SYDNEY (V.O.)

It's probably puberty or something,  
I don't know.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, NARROW HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Checking in on Liam, Sydney finds him reading again by the dim glow of a flashlight.

SYDNEY

Seriously, Goob, come on, not gonna  
say it again.

Caught red-handed, Liam quickly shuts off his flashlight and cuddles into the covers, Sydney softly closing his door.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, VARIOUS - NIGHT**

We watch Sydney turn off all the lights and lock all the doors. Meanwhile-

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I mean... I didn't start my period  
'til last year, waaaaay later than  
everyone else, but... whatever. I  
guess I'm a late bloomer or  
something.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Leaving the stove light on as a night light, Sydney glances at the clock. It's just passed eleven and mom isn't home yet.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Mom wasn't home, so... I had to  
figure out the whole tampon thing  
all by myself. It was weird.

DING! Syd gets a message. We see 'STANLEY BARBER' on the screen.

She picks up her phone and smiles as she reads it. Putting in her headphones, she clicks on a link to the song.

The PULSING MUSIC of BLOODWITCH filling her ears, Sydney surrenders to the sound, her body moving awkwardly to the slow heavy guitars. She begins to dance alone in the stillness of her kitchen.

We pull back and watch her dancing, 'silent disco' style. Without the music... it's kinda awkward, yet sweet and vulnerable.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, SYDNEY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Wide awake, Sydney attempts to masturbate under the covers.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Sometimes, at night, I touch myself. But I have to be quiet, because we have super thin walls.

But. She stops. *Frustrated.*

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I've never been able to go all the way though. For whatever reason... I stop.

Unable to sleep, she pulls the covers back, getting up.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

It kinda sucks, 'cause... I'm always horny.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Curled on the couch, alone in the dark, Sydney watches infomercials, eating peanut butter straight out of the jar.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Peanut butter helps.

We hear the front door open and close, Mom returning home. She shuffles to the kitchen, opens a bottle of wine, pours a glass and joins Sydney on the couch.

Neither say a word for a pause. Then-



MAGGIE  
 (softly)  
 What are we watching?

SYDNEY  
 (softly back)  
 Don't know.

Another silence, the two still not looking at one another.  
 Then-

SYDNEY (CONT'D)  
 Got called in... to the counselor's  
 office today.

MAGGIE  
 And?

SYDNEY  
 You didn't hear about it?

MAGGIE  
 The school might have called, I  
 don't know, I haven't listened to  
 the message. Why? What'd you do  
 this time?

SYDNEY  
*Nothing.* She just... she wants me  
 to have... like... an outlet or  
 something.

MAGGIE  
 An outlet for what?

SYDNEY  
 To talk about stuff.

MAGGIE  
 (growing irritated)  
 What stuff?

Maggie finally looks at Sydney, causing her to falter to find  
 an answer.

SYDNEY (V.O.)  
 We haven't talked about Dad since  
 he died. It's that heavy thing that  
 we're all too afraid to talk about.

SYDNEY  
 Just... stuff, ya know?

MAGGIE

No. I don't know.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I can't stop wondering... what it'd be like if *Mom* died instead.

SYDNEY

(mildly covering)

Like... like with Dina... Sometimes it feels like... the people I love don't love me back. At least... not in the same way. Or something.

MAGGIE

Well...?

Maggie searches for the right words to impart on her daughter, Sydney holding her breath, longing to be comforted. But... Maggie's exhaustion and grief keeps her from finding the silver lining.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Maybe you're aiming too high, hon.

Beyond disappointed, Sydney watches her mom take another sip of wine, the light of the television dancing on her face.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

I don't know why I still even try with her. Dad would have understood.

With that, Sydney takes her leave from the couch, Mom looking like she couldn't care less.

**INT. SYDNEY'S HOUSE, BASEMENT - NIGHT**

Feeling completely alone and misunderstood, Sydney escapes to the basement, fighting back tears. With one glance to the bottom of the stairs, we get the sense that something happened down here once - something that has stayed with Syd.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Mom acts like... like Dad was never even here.

Quickly, she moves under the stairs and reaches for some loose bricks in the wall, revealing a little hiding place.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

But he was here.

From the hole in the wall, she pulls a little tobacco tin filled with a few photographs and a few key items she has taken from her dad's belongings, unbeknownst to her mother.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

Dad was real. And we were *pals*.

Nestled at the back of the hole are a set of US Marine dog tags. Placing the tags around her neck, she holds the silver close to her heart, her grief and anger overtaking her.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

And since he's been gone...  
something inside me... has forever  
changed.

Closing her eyes, trying to keep the feelings down-

The **FLASHES** once again pulse in her mind:

- The man crouched under the very same basement stairs, weeping. His hand is reaching out to someone.

MAN

They're *coming*...

That someone is *Sydney*...

Sydney is there, in the basement. Standing over the man as he cowers in the shadows. Sydney takes a step forward - her hands now cupped on either side of his face in a manner that almost looks *violent*.

MAN (CONT'D)

They're coming for us.

It's difficult to tell if the man is holding her hands against his face, or if he's trying to get her away from him, the image is so jarring and fast.

We hear his weakening voice-

MAN (CONT'D)

I'm *sorry*.

His body goes limp and collapses onto the hard basement floor. *Dead*.

Sydney steps back from the body.

We don't see her face.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Overtaken by these images, Sydney's eyes are still closed as if she is in some kind of momentary trance, somehow wrangling these images that are being served to her.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

It's like... the moment he died...  
something was awakened. And... each  
day... it's only growing stronger.

As we pull back from her face, this leads to a kind of reverie. Her eyes open, brimming with tears. She squeezes the dog tags.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

And I'm starting to realize that...

**CRACK!**

Behind her, the redbrick wall bursts with a small, but deep fracture.

Baffled, Sydney turns around, surveying the damage.

SYDNEY (V.O.)

...maybe I'm more fucked up than I  
thought.

BLACK OUT.  
CREDITS.