I AM NOT OKAY WITH THIS

Written by

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

PILOT DRAFT
11.8.18
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!
Revision

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 allllll 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.

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

MR. FILE (CONT’D)
-blood reaches the penis, and gets trapped within the corpora cavernosa. The penis expands and-

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 syncronized 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

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.)**

Uuuuugggg... 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-eeeee! Aspartame! Mmmmmm!
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 serving 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-- I 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
Uuuuggg, 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 a 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

Cuddled 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 that I thought.

BLACK OUT.
CREDITS.