SWELL

by

Brandi Self
EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - 1955

The sun peeks down onto a suburban street as residents gather their children into cars to make the morning commute.

SUPER: Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.
- Antoine de Saint - Exupéry

INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - DAY

A horn sounds downstairs as SYDNEY MITCHELL, 17, her demeanor displaying all the symptoms of teenage angst, tosses stuffed animals off her bed, searching for something.

She finds it. Hurries away.

DINING ROOM

Sydney joins the rest of the family, who are standing eerily still around a table, gas masks covering their faces. She throws hers on, accordingly.

They drop to the ground as the matriarch continues to sound the emergency horn in her hand. Then silence.

HENRY, 40s, an ex-military man with a razor-sharp crew cut, rises. Takes his gas mask off. Gently deposits an infant BABY into a crib, pulling the enclosed bubble off her head.

He immediately starts eating.

HENRY
  Mmm. Terrific eggs, dear.

CLAIRE, 40s, a former prom queen trying desperately to hold onto her youth, takes her seat. Pulls the gas mask off.

CLAIRE
  Just the way you like them.

Sydney takes off her gas mask. Slowly starts eating.

CLAIRE
  Sydney, no one likes a fatty patty.
  A lady always leaves a little.

HENRY
  Ah, a little meat on the bones never hurt anyone.

Claire nervously taps her foot.
The baby coos.

Henry sips his coffee.


The rhythmical song soon becomes overwhelming. Sydney drops her fork. Everyone looks down at her.

SYDNEY
I should get going, don’t want to be late.

HENRY
Will you look at the time, I’ll drive you.

SYDNEY
I can walk.

CLAIREF
Yes, a nice walk would be--

HENRY
Don’t be ridiculous, it’s right on the way.

They stand. Claire hands Henry’s briefcase to him. Puckers her lips for a kiss as the baby begins to fuss.

HENRY
Claire.

CLAIREF
Hmm?

HENRY
The baby.

She turns, disappointed. When she looks back, Henry and Sydney are walking out to the car.

She rushes to close the door. Opens it, just a crack.

CLAIREF
Have a wonderful day!

She slams it shut. Thinks for a moment as the baby starts to cry. She walks past her.

LIVING ROOM

Claire switches on the TV.
NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
School boards across the country are now issuing identification tags to all children for the purpose of facilitating speedy and accurate post-attack registration...

She turns up the volume. Sits, her eyes glued to the screen.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Henry looks out the window as he puffs his pipe. Sydney sits beside him, picking at a cuticle.

HENRY
Will you look at those leaves, seems like just yesterday they were green.

SYDNEY
And now they’re brown.

HENRY
I thought we agreed you were going to try to be a little more cheerful.

SYDNEY
Sorry.

HENRY
There’s a new addition to our family and we all got to accept that. Do I make myself clear?

She digs deeper into her cuticle. Watches as her nail bed fills up with blood.

HENRY
Your mother, she hasn’t done this in a while, so she’s going to need our help. That’s what families do, help each other--

A fly lands, its buzzing drowning him out. Sydney focuses it as it taps against the window, trapped.

Henry’s voice brings her back.

HENRY
Princess, did you hear me? We’re here.
She gazes out at the laughing students eagerly entering the building. Gathers up her things. Opens the door.

HENRY
Aren’t you forgetting something?

He taps his cheek. She gives him a quick kiss. Gets out.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

LISA, 16, her thick glasses making her eyes appear larger and more excited, and TAMMY, 17, sexuality oozing out of every pore, hurry over to Sydney.

LISA
Sydney, I almost didn’t recognize you!

TAMMY
(flirting)
Good morning, Mr. Mitchell.

HENRY
You girls have a good day.

Henry motions for Sydney to smile. She obeys. He drives off.

TAMMY
You missed a crazy summer. So many guys, so little time.

LISA
I’m going steady with Eddie Rogers, can you believe it?

They lock arms with Sydney. Guide her inside.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sydney, Lisa, and Tammy stop at their lockers.

TAMMY
All I’m saying is what’s the point of going steady if you’re not going to do anything?

LISA
We’ve done... things. I mean, not all the way, but--
SYDNEY
You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to, Lis. It’s okay.

TAMMY
What do you know, you’ve never even kissed a boy.

LISA
Maybe she met some tall, handsome stranger while she was at her aunt’s this summer.
(to Sydney)
Did you?

SYDNEY
No.

TAMMY
So, what did you do?

Sydney’s eyes land on the ultimate adversary of conformity, KEVIN STEWART, 17. Tammy follows her gaze.

TAMMY
Well, hello James Dean. Who is he?

LISA
He just transferred here. I heard he killed his parents, set their house on fire.

TAMMY
Well, I don’t care if he’s Jack the Ripper, he’s a real hot rod. Look alive, he’s coming over.

Tammy fluffs her hair. Sydney looks up, making shy eye contact with him as he strolls over.

TAMMY
Hi, I’m Tammy.

KEVIN
Kevin.
(to Sydney)
What’s your name?

SYDNEY
Sydney.

TAMMY
So, I guess since you’re new, you don’t have a date to the dance--
KEVIN
(to Sydney)
Are you going?

SYDNEY
I don’t know.

KEVIN
Well, maybe I’ll see you there.

He takes her in for a moment. Smiles before walking off.

TAMMY
Did you see that, he completely ignored me. What is he, blind?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Sydney and a homogeneous group of students stare at a grainy, black and white, moving picture.

She glances over at Kevin. He waves. She smiles, uncomfortably. Goes back to...

ON THE SCREEN

A typical 1950s family enjoy each other’s company as a grill cooks lunch behind them.

FRIENDLY NARRATOR (V.O.)
Sundays, holidays, vacation time, we must be ready, every day, all the time, to do the right thing if the atomic bomb explodes.

A light flashes. An alarm sounds.

FRIENDLY NARRATOR (V.O.)
Duck and cover!

They throw the picnic blanket over their heads in a ridiculous attempt to protect themselves.

FRIENDLY NARRATOR (V.O.)
This family knows what to do, just as your own family should. They know that even a thin cloth helps protect them. Even a newspaper can save you from a bad burn.

BACK TO CLASSROOM
Sydney feels something. Pulls her skirt up. Looks down in horror at the bright, red bloodstain on the fabric.

FRIENDLY NARRATOR (V.O.)
But, the most important thing of all is to duck and cover.

She takes her sweater off. Discreetly wraps it around her waist. Quickly gathers her books as she stands.

TEACHER
Excuse me, Miss Mitchell, where do you think you’re going?

Uniformly, the students turn to face her.

Sydney looks over at Kevin, a response stuck in her throat.

SYDNEY
I...

She rushes off as he watches after her, curiously.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sydney enters, passing the blaring TV where President Eisenhower is making a speech. She hurries upstairs.

CLaire (O.S.)
Henry, is that you? I’m making--

Claire comes out, disappointed. Goes back into the...

KITCHEN

Claire opens the cabinet to reveal shelves overflowing with an obscene amount of preserved food, meticulously arranged and labeled.

She grabs the catsup. Dumps it into a bowl over raw meat. Mixes it together with her hands.

The red mush of the uncooked meatloaf blends into the...

BATHROOM

Water turns red as a half-naked Sydney submerges her bloody skirt in the sink.

The front door closes downstairs.
CLAIRE (O.S.)
Henry, is that you? I’m making meatloaf!

Sydney sighs. Studies her curvy figure with both curiosity and disgust as she fingers the dog tags around her neck.

A knock comes at the door. She quickly grabs a towel. Wraps it around herself as the door is pushed open.

SYDNEY
I’m not decent!

She rushes to close it, but Henry places his foot in between.

HENRY (O.S.)
Just wanted to see how your first day back was.

SYDNEY
I don’t know. Fine, I guess.

HENRY
You sure?

SYDNEY
Yes.

He makes eye contact with her in the mirror. It is long and awkward as Sydney struggles to keep herself covered.

HENRY
Well, don’t be too long, your mother’s making meatloaf.

He slowly pulls his foot back. She slams the door closed. Takes a deep breath.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Sydney walks down the hall with Lisa and Tammy, who is waving at guys as they go past.

TAMMY
I was thinking, maybe he’s just intimidated by me.

LISA
Who?

TAMMY
James Dean.
SYDNEY
Or maybe he isn’t interested.

TAMMY
All guys are interested. What do you have the hots for him or something?

SYDNEY
No.

LISA
He’s kind of cute, for a murderer, I guess--

TAMMY
(to Sydney)
So, you don’t mind if we--

SYDNEY
(shrugs)
What do I care.

MS. CORBIN, a 1930’s transplant whose eccentricities are bleeding through her conservative wear, pops her head out a door.

MS. CORBIN
Miss Mitchell, I’m glad I caught you. Would you mind a word?

TAMMY
(whispers)
Watch her hands.

They giggle as Sydney walks away.

MS. CORBIN’S OFFICE

Sydney follows Ms. Corbin into a feminist haven where books lie open, ready to be reread and pictures of women with large signs proclaiming, “Equal Jobs, Equal Pay” and “Equality!” line the walls.

Sydney takes in a colorful picture of a woman in work clothes, her arm flexed, with a voice bubble that says, “We Can Do It”.

MS. CORBIN
Rosie the Riveter. The pioneer of women’s rights...
(lights a cigarette)
To me, anyway.
SYDNEY
Why is she dressed like a man?

MS. CORBIN
She was doing a man’s work. They went off to fight and the women took over. Some say we did a better job than them.

SYDNEY
What sort of jobs?

MS. CORBIN
Oh, all kinds. But, it wasn’t just about receiving a paycheck, we had finally earned their respect.

SYDNEY
And after the war was over?

MS. CORBIN
Well... the men forgot. Hell, the whole damn world forgot. And here we are, almost twenty years later, women back in the kitchen, but this time with a smile.

She takes a drag as she eyes Sydney.

MS. CORBIN
So, what are your plans after graduation?

SYDNEY
I don’t know, I guess I haven’t really thought about it.

MS. CORBIN
I took a look at your grades from last year, and I have to say, I’m impressed. I think you have a real chance.

SYDNEY
A chance for what?

MS. CORBIN
The Nightingale. The first scholarship exclusively for women and I want to recommend you.

SYDNEY
Me... why?
MS. CORBIN
I’ve seen you in the halls, around your friends. There’s something about you that doesn’t quite align with your female counterparts, am I right?

SYDNEY
It seems all they really care about lately are--

MS. CORBIN
Boys and parties?

They share a smile.

SYDNEY
Something like that.

MS. CORBIN
Well, I can’t guarantee that there won’t be more of that, but they would pay for tuition, books, room and board. Any school you want.

SYDNEY
Anywhere?

MS. CORBIN
Within the country, anyway.

SYDNEY
What’s the catch?

MS. CORBIN
(digs through her desk)
There would be an essay at the end. Standard stuff, why you’re a good fit, etcetera--

SYDNEY
I can do that.

MS. CORBIN
And, of course, you would need to keep your grades up...

SYDNEY
(excitement building)
Of course.
MS. CORBIN
I want you to understand, this is your chance to be a part of changing the way they think about us, how they view all women.

SYDNEY
It would be an honor.

MS. CORBIN
Well... Great. Now, all I need is for your parents to sign and we can get started.

Sydney’s smile drops as she zeros in on the paperwork. The words “parents’ signatures” seem to pulsate in bold type.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Henry throws his club into a bag as BILL REID, early 40s, a balding bulldog, drinks out of a flask and pouts.

BILL
I don’t know why I bother.

HENRY
What's the matter, old boy, I only beat you by a couple of strokes.

BILL
But, you still won, didn’t you? Just like you always do. (scoffs) I need a drink.

Henry laughs as they make their way into the sunset.

INT. GOLF COURSE - CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Henry and a still slightly sour Bill enter. They grab a table.

HENRY
Maybe work on your backswing a little bit.

BILL
Work on my backswing, hmph. (lets it go) So, how’s family life?
HENRY
Sydney’s good. The baby’s good.

BILL
And, Claire?

HENRY
She, uh... wants me to build a bomb shelter.

BILL
(chuckles)
The ol’ “housewife hysteria”. Marla used to be the same way, now I pay someone to listen to her quack, so I don’t have to.

HENRY
You sent her to a shrink?

BILL
Doctor Hoyle. He’s great, I’ll give you his number.

HENRY
Claire hasn’t left the house in almost a year.

BILL
He makes house calls.
(swigs out of flask) It’s never going to happen here, you know. Hell, we went over to Germany to make sure of that.

HENRY
That we did. That we did.

An attractive WAITRESS, early 20s, approaches.

WAITRESS
Afternoon gentlemen, today we have--

BILL
Two Old Fashioneds, sweetheart.

HENRY
Make one of those an iced tea.

WAITRESS
Anything else?

BILL
Your address.
She gives an obligatory smile. Softens towards Henry.

WAITRESS
What about you? We have grilled oysters today, they’re delicious.

HENRY
Just the ice tea. Thank you.

She lingers before walking away. Bill leers after.

BILL
God, they’re so tender at that age.
(turns to Henry)
She was all over you, why didn’t you take the damn oysters and whatever else she was offering?

HENRY
She was just being friendly. And need I remind you, I’m married.

BILL
Yeah, and apparently you’re a teetotaller now, too. What was that drink order about?

HENRY
I’ve been told that I don’t make the best decisions when I drink.

BILL
Those sound like women’s words.

HENRY
 Doesn’t make them any less true.

BILL
We’re men, we deserve every last drop.

HENRY
So, how’s work?

BILL
I go in, sit at a desk until my ass goes numb, talk people into paying for something they’ll never use. Who wants to hear about my job? Now, you...

HENRY
What about me?
BILL
Don’t be smug. All those college girls, hanging onto your every word, no wonder Claire’s losing her mind.

HENRY
It’s my job, Bill.

BILL
Oh, what I would do if I was in your position. God love her, but Marla, she’s like my clubs...

He pulls a golf club out of his bag. Examines it.

BILL
I love my clubs, I get a lot of use out of them. But, eventually, they get worn out. Dull. And I have to go to the store and replace them. And you, my friend, work at the store.

HENRY
I always love your analogies.

BILL
You know I’m right.
(stands)
Hitting the head. Do me a favor and try to hold your charms until I get back.

HENRY
I’ll see if I can manage.

BILL
Try real hard.

Bill stumbles away as the waitress comes up. She sets down the drinks.

WAITRESS
Here you go. And if you need anything else, I’ll be right over there--

HENRY
Thank you.

Slightly disappointed, she turns to go as he zeros in on the alcohol, the condensation dripping off the side like sweat.
He slowly fingers the top of the glass, contemplating.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire absentmindedly pats the baby, making her burp up, all over her shirt.

    CLAIRE
    Oh, not again. Lola!

Dressed in a pressed uniform, LOLA, 50s, rushes in, her large smile hiding her guardedness.

    LOLA
    Yes, Mrs. Mitchell?

    CLAIRE
    (shoves her into her arms)
    Take her, please.
    (wipes her shirt)
    Oh, what’s the point?

Claire watches as Lola makes her way over to the window, entertaining the baby along the way.

    CLAIRE
    You make it look so easy.

    LOLA
    You’re just out of practice, that’s all.

    CLAIRE
    Who are you kidding, I can’t even leave the house, let alone raise another child.

    LOLA
    Come here, I want to show you something.

    CLAIRE
    Oh, Lola, I’m exhausted, can’t it wait?

    LOLA
    It will only take a minute, come on now.

She reluctantly joins Lola at the window.

    CLAIRE
    What?
LOLA
Look out there. Beautiful, ain't it? Who wouldn't rather be out there than in here?

CLAIRE
I can't.

LOLA
How do you know unless you try?

Claire bites her lip as she stares outside longingly.

LIVING ROOM - LATER
Lola stands behind Claire, who is slowly making her way to the door with a gas mask over her face.

LOLA
There you go, right to the door.

CLAIRE
This is silly, we have so much to do. Did you pick up the groceries?

LOLA
The groceries can wait.

Claire takes a deep breath. Cautiously opens the door. Through the gas mask, birds chirp and children play outside.

LOLA
See, that's not so bad, is it?

CLAIRE
No, it's kind of nice.

She takes a hopeful step forward. A car backfires. She jumps. Slams the door shut. Slides down the wall.

She sighs as she helps Claire up.

LOLA
Next time, Mrs. Mitchell. Next time.

Lola guides her away from everything that is "outside".

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT
Sydney picks at her food as Claire watches Henry eat.
Henry
Another good day at school I hope?

SYDNEY
School was okay.

CLAIRE
Well, I almost made it outside--

HENRY
(to Sydney)
Just “okay”?

SYDNEY
Actually--

CLAIRE
I even opened the door. I was right there and--

HENRY
(to Sydney)
Actually, what?

Claire leaves the table. Turns the TV on in the living room.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
Mannequin families supplied by private industry are to represent Mr. and Mrs. America.

HENRY
Turn it off, Claire.

CLAIRE
No, the Murphys are about to get their new house and I want to see.

ON THE TV
A dark, grainy picture shows a family of dummies posed around the dinner table in a typical suburban home, dressed in their Sunday Best.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
They’re lifeless dummies, but to civil defense officials testing bomb shelters, they could save lives.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

HENRY
Actually, what?
SYDNEY
It’s just a paper that I--

CLAIRE
Shh, they’re about to begin.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

HENRY
What kind of paper?

Claire turns the TV up louder. The countdown on the TV continuing as the tension in the house rises.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
Six. Five. Four.

HENRY
Claire, really.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
Three. Two.

CLAIRE
Three. Two.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
One!

SYDNEY
(overlapping)
I want to go to school out of state!

ON THE TV
The blast takes down the house, demolishing the dummies in an almost harmonious manner. Dummy legs, half faces, and rubble fly into the air.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM
Claire screams as Henry turns the TV off.

HENRY
Where is all this coming from?

SYDNEY
There’s a scholarship and Miss Corbin says--

HENRY
That commie feminist?
SYDNEY
She’s not a communist.

HENRY
Someone should blacklist that woman.

SYDNEY
I just need you to sign the permission slip.

HENRY
Absolutely not.

SYDNEY
But, that’s not fair. Everything you’re saying, it’s... There are women’s rights, you know!

HENRY
(in Claire’s direction)
Women’s rights, are you hearing this?

CLAIRE
They murdered them.

HENRY
(to Sydney)
I don’t know what’s going on with you lately, but there is no way--

The doorbell rings. They freeze.

HENRY
Expecting someone?

Not getting a response, Henry throws down his napkin and heads for the door.

He cautiously opens it to find Lisa and Tammy standing outside.

HENRY
Yes?

LISA
We’re here to get Sydney for the dance.

HENRY
Why is this the first I’m hearing of this?
SYDNEY
  (joining them)
I didn’t say “yes”.

LISA
It’s a sock hop. You know, you
dance in your socks?

HENRY
A dance. Sounds like there are
going to be boys there.

SYDNEY
Just like every day at school.

TAMMY
The teachers are chaperoning.
  (flirting)
It’s really juvenile.

HENRY
I don’t think so, not tonight.

Henry tries to shut the door, but Sydney holds it.

SYDNEY
Why not?

HENRY
Excuse me, young lady?

SYDNEY
Why... not?

The TV comes back on, full blast behind them. Henry turns to
Claire, distracted.

HENRY
Do I have to unplug it altogether?

CLaire
Why did it have to happen? Why
them, of all people?

The drill horn sounds as the baby starts crying behind Henry.

HENRY
Claire, please!

TAMMY
(pEEKS around)
Is she okay?
HENRY
(blocks her)
Mrs. Mitchell has been feeling a little under the weather lately.

SYDNEY
So, can I go?

LISA
Please, Mr. Mitchell?

Henry gives Sydney the death stare.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Sydney, Lisa, and Tammy enter into the streamer filled, poodle-skirted monotony that is a high school dance.

LISA
Isn’t this just swell?

TAMMY
Kevin’s going to flip when he sees what I’m wearing. I stuffed, can you tell?

LISA
A little bit, on the side.

Lisa helps her, before spotting someone in the distance.

LISA
There’s Eddie! Oh god, he’s looking over here. What should I do?

SYDNEY
Go dance with him.

LISA
Of course, it’s a dance, that makes sense. Okay, here goes nothing.

She joins EDDIE ROGERS, a sweater vest of a personality on the dance floor as Ms. Corbin waves in Sydney’s direction.

TAMMY
Ugh, Ms. Corbin, she’s obsessed with you. What a lesbian.

MS. CORBIN
(joins them)
You girls having a good time?
TAMMY
A blast, Ms. Corbin.

Tammy grabs a random guy. Dances off with him.

MS. CORBIN
So, I see they managed to get you to come.

SYDNEY
Yeah.

MS. CORBIN
Nothing wrong with letting your hair down a little bit before the real work begins.

SYDNEY
I’ve been thinking, maybe this whole scholarship thing is a dumb idea.

MS. CORBIN
You were so excited in my office, what changed?

SYDNEY
I don’t know. What if you’re wrong... about me, I mean.

MS. CORBIN
Hmm...
(lights a cigarette)
You know, when I was your age, I was offered something similar. Nowhere near this, of course, but someone believed in me and I threw it all away.
(ponders)
You don’t want to live with that regret. It gnaws at you, breaks you down.

SYDNEY
You don’t understand.

MS. CORBIN
I understand that you’re probably scared. Scared of leaving the comforts of what you know. Scared of leaving home--

SYDNEY
That’s not it.
Then, what is it?

Sydney stays silent. Ms. Corbin sighs. Stares out at the cookie cutter kids on the dance floor.

All these girls are going to go off, get married and have kids, never knowing that there’s anything more out there.

Maybe they don’t think they have a choice.

You always have a choice. Question is, are you willing to take a chance?

Sydney looks up at Ms. Corbin, gauging her before staring back out at the girls.

Sydney comes out. Peers up at the stars. Closes her eyes.

I got to a hundred once, you know. After that I just sort of lost count.

She turns to find Kevin, leaning against his cherry red, convertible muscle car, smoking a joint.

I didn’t know anyone else was out here.

Just me and you.

 Aren’t worried about getting in trouble?

Never crossed my mind.

Why aren’t you inside?
KEVIN
Maybe I didn’t want to get my socks dirty.

SYDNEY
It is pretty silly, isn’t it?

KEVIN
Yeah. And the music, talk about square.

SYDNEY
Hey, I liked the music. They played The Four Aces.

KEVIN
(sings mockingly)
"Take my hand. I’m a stranger in paradise, all lost in a wonderland--"

SYDNEY
They don’t sound like that and you can’t sing.

KEVIN
You kids and your fads, what happened to good old-fashioned music, something with soul?

SYDNEY
And what do you listen to?

KEVIN
(motions playing a horn)
Straight jazz, baby.

SYDNEY
So, if the music is so bad and you won’t take off your shoes, then why did you even come?

KEVIN
Why did you?

SYDNEY
It’s better than being at home.

KEVIN
Hmm...
(looks back at the stars)
Hey, you want to get out of here?

SYDNEY
I don’t even know you.
KEVIN
Who really knows anyone?

He flicks the joint. Gets into his car. The engine roars as he starts it.

Sydney looks back at the school, weighing her options before finally jumping in.

EXT. LOOK OUT POINT - NIGHT

The moon hangs low over more than a dozen cars filled with teenagers hungrily groping each other.

Sydney and Kevin lay on the hood of his car, staring out at the view of the suburban neighborhood.

KEVIN
Look at all those houses. Exactly the same and the people inside them are even worse.

SYDNEY
I don’t know, it kind of looks peaceful from up here.

KEVIN
Anything can look peaceful from a distance.

He lights a joint. Inhales as she watches the smoke swirl.

SYDNEY
You ever think that the people that claim to be so happy are just faking it?

KEVIN
I think some people will do anything to avoid the truth.

SYDNEY
The truth about what?

KEVIN
About life. About how it eats at your soul. I mean, don’t you ever get fed up? Angry?

SYDNEY
Nobody’s ever asked me that.
KEVIN
But yet you already know the answer, don’t you?

SYDNEY
(RE: the joint)
Can I try that?

KEVIN
You sure?

She nods. Awkwardly takes it.

KEVIN
Here, just put it up to your lips... Don’t swallow it. Okay, deep breath in.

She inhales. Chokes. Expands her mind.

LOOK OUT POINT - LATER

The smoke clears revealing Sydney and Kevin gazing up at the sky, high and thoughtful.

SYDNEY
They said we might land on the moon soon.

KEVIN
The moon, that’s crazy.

SYDNEY
Can you imagine, going up that far?

KEVIN
Just blast off, get the hell out of here.

SYDNEY
Yeah.

He smiles before turning somber.

KEVIN
My parents want me to join the military. They’ve got some crazy idea that getting shot at will make me a man.

SYDNEY
What are you going to do?
KEVIN
Well, I’m not going to be one of these squares that just does what they’re told. That’s how you end up in a box, shipped back with an American flag draped over the top and a “thank you for your service” letter attached. No way, man.

SYDNEY
How are you going to get out of it?

KEVIN
I’m already in it, it’s all around us. I mean, they tag us the same way they would a dog and we just accept it, find comfort in it even. Why?

SYDNEY
They have to be able to identify us.

KEVIN
It’s so they can collect our mangled bodies, how sick is that... Even in death, we can’t escape.

SYDNEY
When it happens, it’ll be chaos.

KEVIN
Where’s the proof that this threat even exists? Real proof and I don’t mean them blowing up fake shit, not what they show us on TV.

SYDNEY
You don’t believe the bomb’s real.

KEVIN
If I believed, would it make it any less deadly?

SYDNEY
What can we do, we have to wear them. They said--

KEVIN
To hell with what they said.

He takes off his dog tags as he stands up on the car.
SYDNEY
What are you doing?

KEVIN
(screams)
We refuse to listen to any more of your lies and propaganda. We will not be tracked and treated like dogs anymore!

SYDNEY
Hey, people are looking.

KEVIN
Let them look. And when they’re done, they can kiss my ass!

He throws the dog tags over the cliff. Sydney bursts into giggles. He plops back down, satisfied.

KEVIN
Let’s see them try to find me now.

The laughter trickles off.

SYDNEY
Secretly, I hope there really is a bomb. A big blast that would just wipe everything out.

Their eyes meet. And then their lips.

Over to another car, where Tammy is glaring at them from underneath the guy she grabbed before.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney enters to find Henry puffing his pipe, waiting.

HENRY
You look just like your mother, standing there, all grown up.
(stands)
But, there’s such a thing as growing up too fast, you know.

SYDNEY
It was just a dance.

HENRY
So, did you dance? Did you let those dirty boys put their hands all over your body?
SYDNEY
No.

HENRY
I don’t believe you. Show me.

He pulls her into a tight embrace. Rubs up against her as she tries to break free.

SYDNEY
I... I want to go to bed, I’m tired.

HENRY
I want you to forget about that scholarship, you hear me?

SYDNEY
(looks away)
Okay.

HENRY
Don’t placate me like your mother, I’m serious. Say it!

SYDNEY
I’ll forget about it!

HENRY
(loosens his grip)
That’s better. Now, where’s my goodnight kiss?

She kisses him on the cheek. He turns and she catches his lips.

HENRY
Got you.

SYDNEY’S BEDROOM

Sydney storms in. Wipes her mouth in disgust.

She pulls the scholarship paperwork out. Hesitates for a moment before quickly signing her parent’s names.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire lays on the couch in front of DOCTOR HOYLE, 50s, who holds a pen and pad, ready to record all that is abnormal.
CLAIRE
I don’t even know why you’re here. There’s nothing wrong with me, really.

DR. HOYLE
Your husband seems to think you have certain... Preoccupations. That maybe the current events are upsetting you.

CLAIRE
Who wouldn’t be upset, the Russians can drop it at any time.

DR. HOYLE
The bomb. (scribbles on his pad) And that worries you?

CLAIRE
Every night, I lie awake, counting the food in my mind--

DR. HOYLE
And you don’t think that’s obsessive?

CLAIRE
We have to eat. We must have enough to survive.

DR. HOYLE
I see. Well, I hear there’s been a new addition recently, that must be exciting.

CLAIRE
What?

DR. HOYLE
The baby.

CLAIRE
Is she crying again?

DR. HOYLE
I’m guessing it’s been hectic around here. Why don’t we talk about that?

CLAIRE
They’re doing testing on dummies in the desert now, did you know that?
DR. HOYLE
No, I wasn’t aware.

CLaire
They look just like us. There they are, enjoying their dinner and then... Boom! It’s all over.

DR. HOYLE
I want you to repeat after me, everything is going to be fine, everything is going to be okay.

CLaire
“Everything is going to be fine.
Everything is going to be okay.”

DR. HOYLE
Now, I want you to say that phrase whenever you are feeling stressed or fearful.

CLaire
That’s it?

DR. HOYLE
(hands her a pamphlet)
That and a prescription for Miltown should even you right out.

She looks down at the pamphlet: An overjoyed housewife grins, surrounded by all her womanly duties. “Miltown. Relief comes fast and comfortably.”

DR. HOYLE
And maybe get yourself a hobby.

CLaire
A hobby?

Claire turns, an exaggerated smile on her face.

CLaire
There’s nothing quite like Tupperware for refrigerator, freezer, cupboard or table.

Over to...

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire, dressed in her best, stands in front of a table full of Tupperware, with a container in her hand.
MARLA, early 40s, and several other HOUSEWIVES watch as she tightens the top.

CLAIRE
All you have to do is press down on the center and lift the seal a bit at one side.

The Tupperware makes a “burping” noise. The housewives giggle as they sip their tea.

CLAIRE
That’s Tupperware’s airtight promise--

HOUSEWIFE #1
The baby!

Claire watches as the housewives rush over to Lola who is coming through the front door, struggling to balance the groceries while pushing the baby in a stroller.

HOUSEWIFE #2
What a darling child.

MARLA
Look at her little fingers, I could just eat them up. May I?

Lola looks at Claire, who is frozen, still presenting the Tupperware.

LOLA
She hasn’t had her bottle, so she might be a little--

MARLA
(picks the baby up)
Nonsense, she’s a dream.

CLAIRE
Ladies, now let’s not get distracted--

HOUSEWIFE #1
Look at her little nose!

Housewife #1 pokes the baby’s nose. The baby laughs.

MARLA
Claire, she’s the spitting image of you. Hold her, I want to get a picture.
Claire puts the Tupperware down as the baby is shoved into her arms. It is awkward.

MARLA
Say “cheese”.

Marla snaps the picture.

PICTURE: Claire grimaces as the baby tries her hardest to break away.

LOLA
I should get these groceries into the refrigerator before they spoil.
(to Claire)
Are you going to be okay?

Claire looks at the baby. Then at the housewives.

CLAIRe
Of course, why wouldn’t I be?

MARLA
It’s so sweet of Henry to let you do this, Bill would never allow me to have a party.

CLAIRe
It’s really more of a presentation and maybe we should get back to--

HOUSEWIFE #2
She just burped up! How adorable.

CLAIRe
(looks down at her shirt)
She does that, seems I can never keep a clean blouse.

HOUSEWIFE #1
What a blessing.

Housewife #3 comes over with a set of Tupperware, freeing Claire, if just for a moment.

HOUSEWIFE #3
How durable are they?

CLAIRe
Oh, very durable.

Claire sets the baby down on the couch and grabs the Tupperware container. Bends it as the baby begins to wiggle.
CLAIRE
You can even drop it upside down
and it will still hold.

HOUSEWIFE #3
That’s great.
(whispers)
I’m actually quite the klutz.

CLAIRE
Tupperware guarantees quality. If
you aren’t--

Thump! The baby wails from the floor.

MARLA
Oh my goodness!

Marla quickly scoops her up as Lola rushes into the room.

LOLA
(comes back in)
What is going on?

HOUSEWIFE #1
The baby fell.

Marla hands the baby off to Lola. They all stare at Claire, who has not moved.

LOLA
I think maybe it’s time you ladies
should be leaving.

CLAIRE
I forgot she was even here.

LOLA
It’s okay, Mrs. Mitchell, she seems
to be fine. Not a scratch on her.
(to housewives)
Good evening, Ladies.

The housewives start to leave.

CLAIRE
No, please don’t go. Marla?

MARLA
Maybe we can make the next one,
when you’re feeling better.
CLAIRE
But, I haven’t shown you everything.

The door closes behind them.

CLAIRE
I still have three more sets!

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - DAY

Sydney and Tammy skate to the edge as Lisa lingers behind.

LISA
I hate ice skating. I’m going to slip again, I know it.

TAMMY
Don’t be such spaz, Lis, come on.

They make their way out. Pull their ice skates off and run through the snow.

They fall onto their backs. Giggle as they begin flapping their arms in an attempt to make snow angels.

TAMMY
(singsong)
The one with the longest wingspan is the most angelic.

Tammy takes her gloves off. Holds them to give her arms more length.

LISA
No fair, you’re cheating.

TAMMY
No one gets anywhere in life without faking it a bit. Right, Syd?

SYDNEY
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

They sit up.

TAMMY
Oh, I think you do.
LISA
Am I missing something, what’s going on? Is this about the scholarship?

SYDNEY
Lisa.

TAMMY
What scholarship?

LISA
She’s a hopeful for the Nightingale, isn’t that wonderful?

SYDNEY
It’s nothing.

TAMMY
No, I want to hear about it. What has Ms. Perfect been up to now?

SYDNEY
Well, there’s this school in San Francisco--

TAMMY
San Francisco, yeah right.

SYDNEY
Or maybe somewhere else, I haven’t decided. It’s not a sure thing, yet.

LISA
They’re supposed to pay for everything.  
(to Sydney)
You’re so lucky.

TAMMY
Fat city. Where do I sign up?

SYDNEY
Is not as easy as all that. I got a recommendation from Ms. Corbin and--

TAMMY
Oh, you think I’m not smart enough?

SYDNEY
I didn’t say that. But, maybe if--
TAMMY
If, what?

SYDNEY
Forget it.

TAMMY
Well, now you have to say it.

SYDNEY
It’s just... maybe if you weren’t concerned with boys so much.

TAMMY
Really?

SYDNEY
I only mean--

TAMMY
I saw you at Lookout Point with Kevin.

LISA
Sydney!

SYDNEY
We were just talking.

TAMMY
Is that what they’re calling it now?

SYDNEY
What are you trying to say?

TAMMY
You know what I think? I think you’re worse than me because at least I have the decency to not pretend to be something I’m not.

SYDNEY
And you’re doing a great job.

LISA
Girls, let’s not argue.

TAMMY
I bet you let him do whatever he wanted while you laid there all demure.
SYNDEY
Shut up!

LISA
Tammy, come on.

TAMMY
Or maybe you didn’t, you don’t
strike me as a first-timer, not
from what I saw.

Sydney decks her. Tammy clutches her face.

TAMMY
You bitch!

LISA
Syd, why would you do that?

TAMMY
You’re going to regret this, you...
you good time girl!

Tammy rushes off, Lisa close behind.

LISA
Tammy, wait!

Sydney lays back in the imprint alone as the snow gently
falls upon her face.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lola enters to find Claire, still dressed in her Tupperware
party attire, laying in the bed, staring at the ceiling.

Lola sets down a plate of food. Starts to open the blinds.

CLAIRE
Don’t.

LOLA
(closes them)
I warmed up some food for Mr.
Mitchell and Sydney and gave the
baby her milk. Don’t you think you
should eat something?

Claire stays silent. Lola sighs.
LOLA
Well, let’s at least get you out of those clothes, it’s been two days. Come on, sit up.

She reluctantly leans forward so Lola can unzip her dress.

LOLA
You’ve got to take better care of yourself, Mrs. Mitchell.

CLAIRE
You know, you’re my only friend.

LOLA
Now that’s nonsense and you know it. Your family loves you.

CLAIRE
They don’t need me anymore.

LOLA
Children always need their mothers.

CLAIRE
Henry cheated on me. He does that when he drinks.

LOLA
Men are always going to be men, we’ve got to accept that.

CLAIRE
One time, I even packed his things, I wanted him to leave. I went into the closet, gathered everything up and then... I saw a puzzle--

LOLA
A puzzle?

CLAIRE
A jigsaw puzzle, right there on the shelf.

LOLA
Oh, I used to love those. Maybe I’ll get one next time I go out and we can do it together.

CLAIRE
Well, I sat down and started doing that puzzle and when I finished I did it again.
I kept going like that for weeks, months even. Soon, the pieces got so worn, they didn’t fit together anymore.

(looks up, eyes pleading)
They just didn’t fit.

LOLA
Maybe you’ll give it another try when you’re ready.
(raises up a Miltown)
Come on, down the hatch.

Claire swallows. Lays back down. Lola pulls the covers up underneath her chin.

LOLA
Try to sleep. Everything will look better tomorrow.

She stares back up at the ceiling again as Lola turns off the lights, leaving her alone.

SYDNEY’S BEDROOM

Sydney looks down at a textbook. Gets frustrated. Pushes it aside. She grabs some paper. Tries to write, but can’t.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Students point and whisper as Sydney starts down the hall.

GIRL #1
Did you hear what she did?

GIRL #2
I heard she was playing backseat bingo with Kevin Stewart--

GIRL #3
But, on the hood of his car, for everyone to see!

GIRL #4
I can’t believe it.

GIRL #3
It’s true, I heard it from Kathy. She was all over him.
GIRL #1
She must be fast, she didn’t even care.

GIRL #4
She better stay away from my Johnny.

Sydney approaches her locker. Stares at the words, “Good Time Girl” scratched into it.

Tammy smirks as she pulls Lisa away.

CLASSROOM - LATER

Sydney struggles through a test as more students stand to turn their papers in. Soon she is the only one left.

HALLWAY - LATER

Kevin tries to stop Sydney as she charges out of the classroom.

    KEVIN
    I didn’t tell anyone, I swear.
    Someone must’ve have seen us or...
    Hey, where you going?

    SYDNEY
    Leaving.
    (over her shoulder)
    You coming?

He hurries to after her.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Passing a joint between them, Sydney and Kevin float amongst the tombstones taking the beauty and stillness in.

    SYDNEY
    Did you really kill your parents?

    KEVIN
    No, they’d never allow that. Got the shed though.

    SYDNEY
    You burned down their shed?
KEVIN
To the earth. My old man came out hysterical, screaming, “you son of a bitch, what have you done? My good tools!”

SYDNEY
I wish I could’ve seen it.

KEVIN
Yeah, I almost busted a gut.

SYDNEY
I’ve thought about it too, you know. Killing them.

KEVIN
Really, a nice girl like you?

SYDNEY
My parents, they’re like aliens from another planet. They’re so weird, I don’t know how they even exist.

KEVIN
“Off with their heads!”

SYDNEY
Too bloody.

KEVIN
Okay, so how would you do it?

SYDNEY
Poison, maybe?

KEVIN
Poison is so boring.

SYDNEY
Run them over with a car?

KEVIN
Do you even know how to drive?

SYDNEY
No... Maybe push them off a cliff?

KEVIN
Or we could just leave.

SYDNEY
Leave?
KEVIN
Why not?

SYDNEY
Well, what are we waiting for?

KEVIN
Now?

SYDNEY
When else?

KEVIN
I mean I would have to get the bread up, where would we stay?

SYDNEY
We could figure it out.

KEVIN
Yeah, and end up homeless.

SYDNEY
I don’t care, let’s just go.

KEVIN
Summer maybe.

SYDNEY
Summer.

KEVIN
Sure. My old man knows I can’t sign the paperwork until I’m eighteen, he’ll have to wait. Then, we can plan it all out and--

SYDNEY
Yeah, great.

Kevin sees her disappointment, tries to compensate.

KEVIN
Who knows, maybe by that time you’ll be driving and you can take over when I’m tired. Picture it, the open horizon--

SYDNEY
You’d let me drive?

She looks into his eyes, challenging him.
INT. KEVIN’S CAR - LATER

Kevin sits nervously beside Sydney, the vast cemetery surrounding them.

KEVIN
Are you sure you want to do this now, here?

SYDNEY
(RE: dead people)
Somehow I don’t think they’ll mind.

KEVIN
I’m not worried about them.

SYDNEY
I’ll be careful.

She takes the keys from him. Starts the car.

SYDNEY
Ready, set--

KEVIN
Now, hold on, this isn’t a drag race. Got your foot on the brake?

SYDNEY
Check.

KEVIN
Okay, put it into drive.

She shifts it into gear.

KEVIN
Now, slide your foot off the brake and gently move it to the gas.

SYDNEY
Gas, which one is that again?
(off his look)

She taps the gas causing the car to spring forward.

KEVIN
Don’t goose it, take it slow.

She eases off. The car rolls along, jumping between acceleration and braking.
KEVIN
Are you using both feet?

SYDNEY
There are two pedals.

KEVIN
One foot, back and forth. You’re going to kill my engine.

SYDNEY
Which foot?

KEVIN
The right one!

She slams on the gas as he struggles to hang on, a look of panic growing on his face.

KEVIN
Left.

She yanks the steering wheel to the left.

SYDNEY
I’m driving! I’m driving, right?

KEVIN
Yeah, you’re driving. Maybe we can slow down a--

SYDNEY
This is fun!

KEVIN
Left!

She turns just in time. Treats the path like a speedway as dust kicks up. She heads to the main road.

KEVIN
Wait, you’re going the wrong way.

SYDNEY
Hold on.

She plows ahead determined. Through the gate, just as another car is coming in from the other side.

KEVIN
Brake!

Kevin covers his eyes as they just miss the other car, cutting them off. He gasps as he looks back in amazement.
KEVIN
Jesus Christ...
(laughs)
That was awesome!

The car continues down the street, alive people inside.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Someone peeks out the curtains as Sydney gets out of the
driver’s side and Kevin comes around to meet her.

SYDNEY
I can’t believe I did it.

KEVIN
You’re something else, Sydney Mitchell.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Claire lets the curtain drop, jealousy lining her face.

CLAIRE
She’s home.

Henry looks out the window, his anger building as he watches
Sydney and Kevin embrace.

He opens his side table drawer. Pulls out a pistol. Loads it soldier style.

CLAIRE
What are you going to do?

He pushes her out of the way. Charges out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sydney looks up, her smile disappearing as she sees Henry
marching towards them.

SYDNEY
Daddy--

KEVIN
Mr. Mitchell, we were just...

Henry points the gun at him.
HENRY
Step away, Princess.
(to Kevin)
You were just, what?

KEVIN
Just... out for a drive, man.

HENRY
You think I don’t know what that means?

SYDNEY
Nothing happened.

HENRY
Is what she’s got between her legs good enough to take a bullet for? That’s what you’re after, right?

SYDNEY
Leave him alone.

HENRY
Answer the question!

KEVIN
No, I mean... I don’t know?

HENRY
Well, you better figure it out before your brains end up as fertilizer for my lawn.

CLAIRE
Henry, the neighbors.

HENRY
I suggest you get back into your car and drive away.

Kevin looks over at Claire, who is standing silently just inside the house. Then to Sydney, whose head is bowed.

KEVIN
Sydney.

HENRY
You’ve got five seconds.

Kevin hesitantly backs away. Slowly gets into his car.
KEVIN’S CAR

Kevin looks out the window as Henry grabs Sydney. Pulls her inside.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Henry pushes Syndey inside as Claire watches on.

    HENRY
    You’re never to see that boy again!

    SYDNEY
    You can’t tell me what to do!

    CLAIRE
    You heard your father.

    HENRY
    You stay out of this!
    (to Sydney)
    You ever see him again, I’ll take you out of school altogether.

    SYDNEY
    You wouldn’t.

    HENRY
    Try me.

Sydney looks over at Claire, who quickly begins busing herself with Tupperware.

SYDNEY’S BEDROOM

Sydney rages as she comes in the room. Slams the door. Takes the stuffed animals off her bed. Rips them apart until they are nothing.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire, gas mask on, packs her Tupperware and Miltown into a carrier as Sydney and Lola, baby on her hip, watch.

    CLAIRE
    Well, I’m off. I’m going to sell Tupperware. Outside!

    LOLA
    Maybe you can leave that here this time.
Claire slowly pulls the gas mask off. Takes a deep breath. Opens the door.

CLAIRE
Everything is going to be fine.
Everything is going to be okay.

LOLA
You can do it, Mrs. Mitchell.

Sydney’s gaze moves up to Henry at the top of the stairs. He takes a puff off his pipe as they make long, intense eye contact.

Claire walks out. Henry goes into Sydney’s room, leaving the door open behind him.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD – DAY

The car moves at a cool five miles an hour down the street.

INT. CAR – MOVING – SAME

Claire looks over at her Tupperware as the scenery barely changes outside the window. She grins, excitedly.

HENRY (V.O.)
She’s gotten worse, Doctor Hoyle.

INT. DOCTOR HOYLE’S OFFICE – DAY

Dr. Hoyle lights a cigarette. Sits down, concerned.

DR. HOYLE
Still with the atomic bomb?

INT. HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – SAME

Henry sighs.

HENRY
Tupperware, door to door.

INTERCUT HENRY / DOCTOR HOYLE

DR. HOYLE
A hobby, that’s wonderful.
HENRY
I don’t see what’s so wonderful about it.

DR. HOYLE
Implement a smaller distraction to dial down a debilitating obsession. It’s elementary, the basis of psychiatry.

HENRY
Her behavior, it’s affecting the children. My oldest, she’s been acting out.

DR. HOYLE
It’s always hard for the family. Now, I must warn you, anxiety is only the first hurdle we must clear.

HENRY
What else are we talking about?

DR. HOYLE
The Baby Blues. With her giving birth this late in life--

HENRY
What does she have to be blue about? I hired help and I take care of the baby when I get home.

DR. HOYLE
I’m afraid it’s a little more complex than that.

HENRY
But, she can be fixed, right?

DR. HOYLE
Give the Miltown a chance to settle in and let me keep working with her and I promise she’ll be back to the woman you married.

HENRY
Thank you, doctor.

Henry hangs up the phone. Looks down at the baby.
EXT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Sydney and Claire step out of the car.

Claire spots a bomb shelter sign: “Fallout Shelter in Basement” and quickly turns away. Bundles herself up.

CLAIRE
Here we are. I mean, it’s just one block, but can you believe it?

Claire goes inside the store, as Sydney watches her.

INT. DRUGSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Sydney reluctantly follows behind Claire as she grabs a cart.

CLAIRE
Will you look at all this stuff. All these glorious items, right at my fingertips!

SYDNEY
Why did I have to come?

CLAIRE
Do you have somewhere else to be? (off her silence) I thought not.

Claire pulls out a grocery list. Starts taking things off the shelf and placing them in the cart.

CLAIRE
You would think you would want to celebrate your own mother’s victories... Grab a shower cap.

SYDNEY
(grabs it)
Maybe we should throw you a party.

CLAIRE
Maybe you should. I’ll have you know that I met my monthly Tupperware quota and have been entered into a raffle. I could win a toaster oven. (consults her list) Cotton balls, cotton swabs... You can make all kinds of toast in there, even cinnamon.
You know how much your father loves cinnamon toast.

Sydney pulls the cotton balls and swabs off the shelf.

CLaire
Baby formula... And if I win two raffles, well, then I get my pick of kitchen appliances. Electric mixers, coffee pots... Sydney?

Sydney
Coffee pots.

CLaire
Baby formula. Please.

Sydney obeys.

CLaire
They even invited me to the Jubilee. What do you think about that, smarty pants?

Claire waves at two women as they pass them.

CLaire
Hi, ladies!

WOMAN #1
(whispers)
Is that Claire?

WOMAN #2
(whispers)
She left the house.

CLaire
I’ll be having another Tupperware party, you should come by.

WOMAN #2
Will do!

CLaire
(continues on, whispering)
That poor woman, her husband just left her. Can you imagine?

Sydney
She looks fine to me.

CLaire
She’s an absolute mess.
They approach the pharmacy counter. A middle-aged PHARMACIST grins at them, bottles lining the shelves behind him.

PHARMACIST
Hello, Mrs. Mitchell. Here to pick up a prescription?

CLaire
There should be one bottle.

PHARMACIST
(pulls out a bag)
One month of Clarkotabs. Now, you’re going to want to take one a day, that should melt the pounds off pretty quickly.

CLaire
Obviously, they’re not for me, they’re for my daughter. She has too much... “meat on her bones”.

SYDNEY
I don’t want any pills.

CLaire
Well, we all have to do things in life that we don’t want to do. (chipper) Besides, it will give you a pep in your step.

She snatches the bag. Shoves it into Sydney’s hands.

CLaire
Maybe we’ll get you married off after all. (waves to a woman) Betty! Oh, Betty dear, did I tell you, I’m selling Tupperware now. Can I sign you up for a set?

Claire hurries off down the aisle, leaving Sydney standing alone.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Sydney gets out of the car as Claire gathers her things. Lola exits as they approach.

CLaire
Lola, where are you off to?
LOLA
Mr. Mitchell came home early. He said I could take the rest of the
day off, that he would tend to the baby.

CLAIRE
Oh... I see.

LOLA
Unless you need something else from me?

CLAIRE
No. No, that’s fine.

LOLA
Have a good evening, Mrs. Mitchell.
(whispers to Sydney)
How’d she do?

Sydney passes her without saying anything.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Claire looks in at Henry, who is leaning over the crib, a
stuffed animal in his hand. He jerks it away, causing the
baby to giggle.

HENRY
Peek-a-boo!

She quietly shuts the door. Leans against it, pondering.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Hoyle peers over at Claire, who is laying on the couch.

DR. HOYLE
I heard you made it out of the
house, that’s quite an
accomplishment.

CLAIRE
Do you think I’m attractive?

DR. HOYLE
Is that important to you?

CLAIRE
You always answer my questions with
more questions.
DR. HOYLE
I just don’t think that would be an appropriate subject to comment on.

CLAIRE
He never asks me how my day was.

DR. HOYLE
Your husband?

CLAIRE
It’s like I don’t even exist.

DR. HOYLE
I’m sure he has a lot on his plate.

CLAIRE
He used to make time for me, before the children. Of course, I was different then.

DR. HOYLE
How do you mean?

CLAIRE
Men used to follow me down the street. And Henry, he couldn’t keep his eyes off me. Now, well...

DR. HOYLE
Now, well... what?

Claire zeros in on the massive stack of Tupperware on the table. Ponders.

CLAIRE
You know, sometimes when I unwrap a new piece of Tupperware, I just, I wish I could be like that, all shiny and new.

DR. HOYLE
I’m not sure I follow.

CLAIRE
People like Tupperware, they never get tired of it. It keeps everything so fresh. Nothing goes bad. Nothing gets old.

Claire sighs, finding solace in the plastic.
INT. CAR - DAY

Henry watches Sydney exit the car and make her way towards the school.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - SAME

Kevin tries to catch up with Sydney as she heads for the door.

    KEVIN
    Hey, you okay?

    SYDNEY
    He’s watching.

    KEVIN
    Who, your father? He doesn’t scare me.

    SYDNEY
    Could’ve fooled me.

    KEVIN
    What was I supposed to do, he had a gun.

    SYDNEY
    Just leave me alone, okay?

    KEVIN
    Do you know how hard it was for me to leave you there?

    SYDNEY
    And I’ll bet when you got home you cried yourself to sleep.

    KEVIN
    What happened after I left?

    SYDNEY
    What, you want all the graphic details so that you can include them in your next speech on injustices of the world?

    KEVIN
    You’re mad at me? You should be mad at him. I mean, he’s an absolute maniac!
SYDNEY
And you’re here to ride in on your white horse and save me, right?
(stops)
Just let me go. If you care about me at all--

KEVIN
(grabs her delicately)
Let’s leave now. We can just jump in the car and go.

She indulges in the affection before her eyes narrow on Henry who is still parked. She pulls her hand away.

SYDNEY
I can’t count on you.

KEVIN
What do you think, that I’m going to stick around here or be shipped off like one of these--

SYDNEY
“Squares”? And what makes you so different than them, huh?

KEVIN
Sydney--

SYDNEY
No! Burning down sheds and preaching about how the world is so messed up doesn’t make you a martyr, it makes you a fool because you’re never going to do anything about it.

KEVIN
Don’t do this.

SYDNEY
Goodbye, Kevin.

She goes inside as he looks after her.

INT. CAR - SAME

Henry eyes Kevin as he walks away defeated.

HENRY
That’s right, buddy, keep it moving.
He takes a puff off his pipe.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - MS. CORBIN’S OFFICE - DAY

Sydney knocks on the door. Opens it to find Ms. Corbin, smoking a cigarette as she looks over paperwork.

SYDNEY
You wanted to see me?

MS. CORBIN
Ms. Mitchell, have a seat. I trust you’ve seen your geometry score.

SYDNEY
I didn’t know they were posted.

MS. CORBIN
C+. Not what I was expecting.

SYDNEY
I can do better. This week has just been--

MS. CORBIN
I know, I spoke to Tammy. She seems to think that maybe you’re distracted.

SYDNEY
You talked about me, with her?

MS. CORBIN
Look, I know competition is hard, especially against a friend, but she’s concerned about you.

SYDNEY
Is that what she told you, that I think of her as competition?

MS. CORBIN
Well, technically you are the only two girls in the running--

SYDNEY
You recommended her?

MS. CORBIN
Surely you didn’t think that you were going to be competing against yourself.
SYDNEY
No, of course not. But why her, of all people?

MS. CORBIN
She’s a motivated student and she’s eager to get out in the workforce.

SYDNEY
She’s just trying to get under my skin.

MS. CORBIN
Well, whatever her reasons, I’m not bringing her in to discuss grades.

SYDNEY
Oh, what does it matter, I’m never going to be anything more than I am right now.

MS. CORBIN
Then give up.

SYDNEY
What?

MS. CORBIN
Roll over and play dead. Say it’s too hard and just be done with it.

SYDNEY
So, that’s it?

MS. CORBIN
Well, I’m not going to coddle you. That’s not how great women are made.

Ms. Corbin gazes up at the pictures of the Women’s Suffrage.

MS. CORBIN
What do you think would’ve happened if they had just sat down, said it was too hard?
(takes a drag)
They marched for six weeks, the soles of their feet on fire. Hungry, beat down, just to make sure that you had this opportunity.

SYDNEY
And I want it, I really do.
MS. CORBIN
Then you fight. You fight like your life depends on it. You find your advantage and you exploit it.

Sydney stares up at the pictures. Lets her words sink in.

INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT


CLAIRE (V.O.)
It will give you a pep in your step.

She opens the bottle. Tosses one back.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-Sydney writes like a maniac. Papers fall to the floor as she finishes each one. It’s happening!

-Icicles melt off the bare trees as the sun begins to peek out behind the Mitchell house.

-Claire smiles as she presents Tupperware to a couple in their living room.

-In the bathroom, Henry pulls a bottle of whiskey out of the back of the toilet. Takes a swig.

-Sydney kicks her legs in the air as she studies, her dress falling to the side as Henry watches her through the cracked door.

-Tammy flirts with Kevin, but his attention is on Sydney as she walks by.

-Sydney pops a Clarkotab / Claire pops a Miltown.

-Claire stacks Tupperware on top of a massive pile. Counts them as Lola encourages the baby to take her first steps.

-Foliage turns to green and flowers bloom, making the neighborhood bright and cheery.

-Sydney shows Ms. Corbin an “A”. They celebrate.

-Back in the bathroom, Henry stares down at the empty bottle of whiskey, disappointed.
INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

A thinner Sydney hurries down the hall with Lisa by her side.

SYDNEY

Business and typing, definitely. They have these new typewriters that practically do the work for you, but you have to learn the keys.

She opens her locker. Throws back a Clarkotab.

LISA

Sydney, what are those? (grabs the bottle) Clarkotabs? No wonder you’ve gotten so skinny, these are nothing but legalized speed.

SYDNEY

They don’t let you sleep, I’m getting so much work done.

LISA

They’re dangerous, you’ve got to stop taking them.

SYDNEY

(snatches them back) I’ve been taking them for months and I’m fine. One more grade before finals, then the essay and I’m gold.

Tammy walks by. They scowl at each other.

LISA

Oh, I wish neither of you had even heard about this scholarship. You’ve both been acting so strange lately.

SYDNEY

I know she doesn’t think she’s really going to win.

LISA

And what if she does, are you prepared for that?
SYDNEY
Of course, you’re on her side.

LISA
I’m not on anyone’s side. But, there has to be a loser. One of you is going to lose.

SYDNEY
It’s not going to be me.

LISA
I miss the old Sydney.

SYDNEY
Well, I don’t!

Sydney slams her locker. Walks away.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY
Sydney makes her way down the street. Stops at the cemetery.
She focuses on a tombstone with a hopeful balloon tied to a pot of flowers as it blows in the wind.
She lingers on it. Becomes it, if only for a moment.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY
Sydney enters to find Lola pulling open the oven, black smoke rushing out.
The baby, now several months older, beats a toy against the highchair.

LOLA
Darn timer, I knew I should’ve checked.
(to Sydney)
Thank goodness. Turn the peas off, will you?

Sydney switches them off as the phone rings. Lola drops the food on the table. Rushes to answer it.

LOLA
Quieten your sister.
(into phone)
Mitchell residence... I’m sorry, can you speak up?
The baby bangs harder.

LOLA
Sydney!
    (into phone)
No, Mr. Mitchell is not... I said, “Mr. Mitchell is not here at this time.” Okay. Yes, good evening to you as well.
    (hangs up)
I couldn’t hear a thing. Why didn’t you...

She turns to find Sydney is gone. Picks up the baby, comforting her.

LOLA
What is wrong with that child?

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Henry passes a few attractive FEMALE STUDENTS. They flirtatiously wave at him.

FEMALE STUDENT #1
Hi, Professor.

HENRY
(respectfully)
Good afternoon.

Henry throws his briefcase into the car as PROFESSOR GIBBONS approaches.

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
Professor Mitchell, old boy, how have you been?

HENRY
Not too bad, George. You?

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
I just wanted to come over and be a good sport since both of our girls are in the running.

HENRY
In the running?
PROFESSOR GIBBONS
The scholarship. Of course, I know neither one of us want our girls to leave the state, but it’s a hell of an honor.

HENRY
I’m sorry, I’m lost. Leave the state?

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
I signed the paperwork months ago. Surely you--

HENRY
(uncomfortable pause)
Oh, yes. It must have slipped my mind.

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
Yeah, it sounds like Sydney is really giving my Tammy a run for her money. I haven’t seen her hit the books like this in I don’t know how long.

HENRY
That’s my girl.

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
Well, I better be off before the wife sends out a search team.

HENRY
(forces a smile)
I should get going as well. Claire’s making steak.

PROFESSOR GIBBONS
Lucky man. Good night.

Professor Gibbons walks away. Henry’s smile turns into a frown.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Henry calmly closes the door behind him. Rages on everything in sight.

INT. GENTLEMAN’S CLUB - NIGHT

Bill tries to smooth talk a waitress.
Beside him, a DANCER moves slowly in front of an inebriated Henry. She tries to move on. He grabs her.

HENRY
I paid for two.

DANCER
Your dances are up.

HENRY
(tightens his grip)
I’ll tell you when I’m finished.

DANCER
Let go, you’re hurting me.

She struggles as a large ATTENDANT confronts him.

ATTENDANT
Hands off.

HENRY
Why don’t you mind your own business?

ATTENDANT
This is my business--

BILL
(intercepting)
My friend, he’s had a little too much to drink. We’ve all had bad days, right?

ATTENDANT
He better watch himself.

HENRY
Fuck you.

ATTENDANT
That’s it, you’re out of here!


BILL
Come on, do you have to do that?

HENRY
Get off me.
(over his shoulder)
I’m a veteran, god damn it!
The attendant drags him out as he screams, out of control.

EXT. GENTLEMAN’S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The attendant throws Henry out into the parking lot. Bill follows, chuckling. Slaps him on the back.

    BILL
    Did you forget the rules, buddy?
    No touching.

    HENRY
    Go to hell.

    BILL
    You know, you’re kind of an asshole when you drink, maybe Claire’s right.

Henry pulls himself up against the wall. Contemplates.

    HENRY
    I think I really messed up this time.

    BILL
    Forget it. I’m sure she’s used to it, she’s a dancer.

    HENRY
    No, not her.

Bill looks at Henry. He is solemn.

    BILL
    Jesus man, what is it?

    HENRY
    (shivers)
    It’s just so cold, isn’t it?

    BILL
    Well, I guess it’s a little chilly--

    HENRY
    Just like I was back in those trenches. So fucking cold. You remember?

    BILL
    The war? Yeah, how could I forget, we were up to our god damn armpits in snow.
HENRY
I’m back there. It’s like I never left.

BILL
Agh...
(sits down beside him)
You got to forget all that, man.
Let it go or you’ll drive yourself crazy. We did what we had to do.

HENRY
We killed people, Bill.

BILL
Those evil pieces of shit deserved it.

HENRY
Maybe they thought what they were doing was right, just like us.

BILL
I think it’s a pretty safe bet to say that we’re better than a bunch of Nazis.

HENRY
When I was out there, I promised myself if I could just make it home, I’d be a good man. A good family man.

BILL
You kidding me? You’re a great husband and an even better dad.

HENRY
Then why did I have to go to her?

BILL
What are we talking about here, you cheated?
(off his silence)
You lucky son of a bitch. Good god, you’re my idol.

HENRY
When I was with her, I just... I was able to leave all that behind, you know? I finally felt like I was back in control.
BILL
Affairs, they’re just par for the course. What are you beating yourself up about?

HENRY
But, Claire, she--

BILL
She’ll get over it, they always do. What you need to do is reclaim your throne.

HENRY
What?

BILL
Get your control back and I’m not talking about through some broad, I’m talking about being a man.

(lightly punches him)
Who’s king of his domain?

HENRY
I am.

BILL
(military bravado)
I can’t hear you, sound off!

Punches him in the stomach. Henry tightens up.

HENRY
I am!

BILL
(hits harder)
Say it loud and proud!

HENRY
I’m king of my domain!

Henry seems to growl.

BILL
Attaboy. To hell with this place, let’s go find another drink.

He wraps his arm around Henry, guiding him to the next distraction.
INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry stumbles into the house, completely wasted, a bag in his hand.

HENRY
Honey, I’m home!

Claire peers out from the kitchen, stacks of Tupperware and the baby in a highchair behind her.

CLAIRE
Henry, is that you? I made...
(laughs, confused)
Isn’t that something, I forgot to make dinner. Not to worry, I can whip up something in a jiffy.

He pushes past her. She hurries after him into the...

KITCHEN

Claire grabs Tupperware out of the refrigerator as Henry falls into a chair.

CLAIRE
How about casserole, it’s got little peas, just like you like.

HENRY
I’m not hungry.

CLAIRE
Or maybe a nice steak.

HENRY
Did you hear me, I don’t want any damn steak!

He takes a bottle of whiskey out of the bag. Slams it onto the table. Claire jumps.

CLAIRE
Is... Is that booze?

HENRY
Will you look at that, I guess it is.

CLAIRE
What is it doing in this house?
HENRY
It’s here because I need a drink. You do that to me, make me want to drown in it.

She watches in disbelief as he takes a swig.

CLAIRE
But, you can't drink--

HENRY
Yeah? Give me one good reason why not.

CLAIRE
Because you’re an alcoholic, Henry!

HENRY
Those are your rules, the rules you set in place to try to control me!

CLAIRE
We agreed.

The baby pushes her tray forward and it dislodges.

HENRY
Get the baby.

CLAIRE
No, we’re going to talk about this.

Henry staggers over to the baby as she begins to climb down. He picks her up.

HENRY
Goddamnit, Claire, can’t you do anything right? (to baby, playfully) Got you, didn’t I? Didn’t I?

He rubs noses with the baby as she coos. Claire reaches for the baby.

CLAIRE
Stop it, you’re drunk. Give her to me.

HENRY
(pulls away) You think I don’t know how to take care of my own own child?
CLAIRE
So what, you’re back at it with... with her? You promised me--

HENRY
And what about what I promised myself, huh? Don’t you think I deserve a little bit of happiness?

CLAIRE
What does she have that I don’t? Tell me, what makes her so god damn special?

HENRY
It’s always someone else, it can’t just be you.

CLAIRE
I’ll leave. I’ll leave, and I’ll take the children.

HENRY
You can barely make it more than a block down the street.

CLAIRE
I add two houses to my route each time. Two on each side, that’s four houses every day.

HENRY
So, go on, do it.

Henry throws the keys at her. They land on the ground but she does not pick them up. He laughs. Grabs the bottle.

HENRY
That’s what I thought.

He staggers away. Claire follows him into the...

LIVING ROOM

Henry plops down with the baby. Takes a big swig as Claire watches them, agonizing.

She goes to him, clutching him dramatically.

CLAIRE
Why can’t we just start over, go back to how it was before?
HENRY
There is no starting over, we are who we are, there’s no changing that.

CLAIRE
Don’t you remember how we used to make love? We were so hungry for each other, we couldn’t get enough. Let me show you, let me make you remember.

She backs away. Slowly strips, becoming naked in front of him.

CLAIRE
See? I’m still here. I’m still the same Claire. You remember, don’t you?

HENRY
Beg me.

CLAIRE
What?

HENRY
You heard me, get on your knees.

CLAIRE
Henry--

HENRY
Beg me.

She slowly drops to her knees. Pathetically crawls towards him.

CLAIRE
I... I beg you.

HENRY
That’s it? Come on, I know you got more than that.

CLAIRE
I need you. I want you. Please, let me make you happy.

He chugs from the bottle, unimpressed as she pleads.
CLAIRE
I can be better than her. I can be whatever you want me to be. Just let me...

She unzips his pants. Pulls them open. Takes him in her mouth.

His head falls back still clutching the baby in his arms. He moans in ecstasy. Finally finishes.

She comes up, kissing him. He pushes her away.

HENRY
I’ll take that steak now.

He takes another drink. Watches as she slowly gets up and walks into the kitchen.

INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Henry tries to steady himself as he stares in at a sleeping Sydney.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Sydney closes her paper. Looks down at the title, “Nightingale Essay”.

SYDNEY
It’s perfect.

She carefully places it in a bag along with a bottle of Clarkotabs. Stands.

She walks in a bubble of oblivion and accomplishment before colliding with Tammy. Their things go flying.

SYNDEY
Hey, why don’t you watch where you’re going?

TAMMY
You ran into me!

They both bend down to gather up their things. Glare at each other, challenging.

TAMMY
So, they make the decision next week, you ready?
SYDNEY
Feeling pretty confident, what about you?

TAMMY
Not worried at all.

SYDNEY
Well, good.

TAMMY
Great.

SYDNEY
Wonderful.

Tammy turns to go. Whirls back around.

TAMMY
By the way, I have a date tonight, maybe you know him, Kevin Stewart? Looks like I can do both.

She smiles before taking off.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney creeps by Henry who is passed out, drunk, the baby in his lap.

The baby lifts her arms for her to pick her up. She watches her for a moment before walking away.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Blanketed in the darkness of night, Claire sits, hands on the steering wheel, staring at the house as teenage pop music starts inside.

INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - SAME

A record rotates as Sydney dances in a wild, speedy manner. She throws back a handful of Clarkotabs. Continues to move.

Out the window, where it is now daybreak...

INT. CAR - DAY

Claire sits, still in the same position as the sun rises.
INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - SAME

Sydney stands in front of a mirror, a little more than a skeleton.

SYDNEY
Thank you. This is such an honor.
No... no.
(regroups)
This is just so unbelievable, I’m honored.

She smiles. Gathers her things and goes out into the...

HALLOWAY

Sydney steps over a stuffed animal that lays just outside her door without acknowledging it and continues on.

INT. CAR - DAY

Claire starts the car. White knuckles the steering wheel as she barely moves through the neighborhood, Tupperware at her side. She counts the houses, anxiously.

CLAIRE
One... two--

A dog runs out in front of her. She brakes. Pulls off to the side of the road. Starts to hyperventilate.

CLAIRE
Everything is going to be fine.
Everything is going to be okay.

She flips down the mirror. Shakes as she powders her nose and attempts a smile.

CLAIRE
You’ve got this beautiful
Tupperware and a smile, that’s all
you need.

She takes in the distance between the car and the house that she plans on soliciting. It seems like it goes on for miles.

A siren comes from the distance. She grabs her bottle of Miltown. Pops them open. Takes one. Then more.
INT. CAR - LATER

Pounding awakens Claire from the slumped position in her car.

ELDERLY MAN (O.S.)
Miss?

She tries to focus on the ELDERLY COUPLE banging on the window.

ELDERLY MAN
Do you need medical attention?
(to elderly woman)
I really think we should call someone.

In a daze, Claire puts the car into drive.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(to Claire)
No dear, I don’t think that’s a good idea. Wait a minute.

She accelerates, running from the elderly people, Tupperware, the bomb... herself.

In her double vision, the road appears to fork. She erratically tries to steer but finds it hard to go either way. She cries. Pounds her fists.

The car spins out of control. Crashes into a tree, causing her head to slam into the steering wheel, triggering the horn.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

The horn continues as the mangled car sits, completely foreign in the plush, pristine neighborhood.

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Yes, I know that Tupperware is a family-friendly brand.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Claire speaks into the phone, her face bruised and battered.

CLAIRE
Of course, the customer’s concerns are valid... But, I’m not dead, I’m fine.
CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(listens)
Fired? What about the Jubilee?

She wraps the long cord around her hand, cutting off the circulation as she listens.

CLAIRE
(explodes)
Don’t you know there are bigger concerns in the world than sealed plastic ware! We can be gone tomorrow. All of us, wiped out! Hello?
(flicks the button)
Hello?

Claire slams the phone back into the hook. She attacks the stack of Tupperware, sending the horrible plastic flying.

LOLA (O.S.)
Mrs. Mitchell, is everything okay?

She whirs around to find Lola, holding the baby.

CLAIRE
No, everything is not okay!

LOLA
I’m sure whatever it is--

CLAIRE
Lola, I don’t want to hear it. I don’t want to hear about how nice it is outside or how tomorrow will be a better day. It won’t!

LOLA
I only meant--

CLAIRE
Pick them up.

Lola looks around the demolished room.

CLAIRE
Did you hear what I said, pick them all up and throw them in the trash!

LOLA
Mrs. Mitchell--

CLAIRE
Now!
LOLA
Just let me put the baby down.

CLaire
Give her to me.

Claire yanks the baby out of her arms as she begins to cry.

CLaire
As a matter of fact, you’re fired.

LOLA
Ma’am?

CLaire
Am I not making myself clear? Get out!

LOLA
But, I haven’t even been paid for the week.

Claire digs into her bra. Tosses money in Lola’s face.

Lola stands shocked for a moment before gathering up the money. She starts to say something but thinks better of it.

Claire puts the crying baby into the crib as Lola walks out the door. She stares down at her with disdain.

CLaire
I wish you were never born.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Glee overflowing, Sydney almost skips through the halls.

MS. CORBIN’S OFFICE

Sydney’s excitement falters when she opens the door to find Ms. Corbin chatting with Tammy, essay in hand.

MS. CORBIN
Oh, I wouldn’t worry about that. No, this all looks good and--
(turns)
There you are. We were just discussing the essay.

TAMMY
You’ve got yours, right?
SYDNEY
Of course, why wouldn’t I?

She digs through her bag. Digs deeper. They watch as her confusion turns to panic.

TAMMY
We’re waiting.

SYDNEY
It was here, I swear. I put it in here right after...

She looks at Tammy, realizing.

HALLWAY - LATER

Tammy exits and greets Lisa. Sydney tries to control her anger as she approaches.

SYDNEY
Just give it to me.

TAMMY
Give what to you?

SYDNEY
Don’t play dumb, I know you have it.

She grabs her bag, but Tammy holds firm.

TAMMY
Hey, what are you doing?

SYDNEY
Give it back!

LISA
Sydney, stop! What’s wrong with you?

Students gather as Sydney yanks Tammy’s bag off her shoulder and begins to go through it in a craze.

SYDNEY
It’s here, I know it.

Ms. Corbin appears in the crowd.

MS. CORBIN
What in the world is going on here?
TAMMY
She just attacked me, Miss Corbin.

MS. CORBIN
Sydney, is that true?

SYDNEY
(still looking)
She must’ve hid it or--

TAMMY
She thinks I took her essay. She’s totally flipped her lid.

MS. CORBIN
That’s it. I want you two to make up, shake hands, apologize, whatever you need to do so that I know this ends here.

SYDNEY
I’m not going to apologize to a thief.

TAMMY
And I’m not going to apologize to a liar!

SYDNEY
You’re the liar!

She throws the bag at her. Ms. Corbin grabs her.

MS. CORBIN
Stop it, this instant, Sydney Mitchell!

SYDNEY
You’re in on it, aren’t you?
(looks around)
You’re all in on it!

She rushes off.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - RESTROOM - LATER

Barricaded in a stall, rips a cuticle off her fingers. Blood gushes out. Picks deeper, torturing herself.

SYDNEY
What are you going to do now?    CLAIRE (O.S.)
What are you going to do now?
INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME

Claire stares into the mirror, naked, her large pitiful breasts sagging.

CLAIRE
Do you hear me, Claire?

She slams her fists against the mirror, cracking it. She screams at the now splintered reflection of multiple Claires.

CLAIRE
Who would want you? You’re used up... Old!

REFLECTION
You’re no Marilyn Monroe yourself.

Claire laughs. Swallows a Miltown.

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Seemingly calmer, Claire sways in front of the mirror.

CLAIRE
Men used to follow me down the street. And Henry, he--

DR. HOYLE (O.S.)
Claire, you’ve already told me this, don’t you remember?

CLAIRE
No, I...

DOCTOR HOYLE (O.S.)
One of our first sessions, you said those exact words.

Claire turns to find Doctor Hoyle sitting on the side of the bathtub, pad and pen in hand.

CLAIRE
What are you doing in my bathroom?

DR. HOYLE
Let’s start from the beginning...

CLAIRE
Get out of my house!
DR. HOYLE
We’re never going to get to the root of your problem if you don’t--

CLAIRE
There is no problem.

She takes more Miltowns.

CLAIRE
(singsong)
Miltown...

REFLECTION
"Relief comes fast and comfortably."

Doctor Hoyle disappears. She turns back to the mirror.

REFLECTION
He’s right, you know. Look at you.

CLAIRE
It can’t be that bad, can it?

REFLECTION
Where to start? Your body, your hair.

She touches her hair, self consciously.

CLAIRE
What’s wrong with my hair?

REFLECTION
Nothing, if we were in nineteen forty-five.

CLAIRE
Not modern enough?

REFLECTION
Not modern at all.

Claire pulls out a pair of scissors. Goes for her hair.

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - EVEN LATER

Claire stares at her reflection. With her butchered hair and bruised face, she looks like an abused mental patient.

CLAIRE
See Henry, now I’m perfect.
Her face and new haircut match up perfectly with...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - RESTROOM - SAME
Sydney’s face and hair as she gazes into the mirror, realization setting in.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY
The refrigerator light goes on as Claire peers in. A fly lands on her face.
She backs away from the refrigerator, revealing spoiled clumps of food, sitting on the shelf in the open.

CLAIRE
Lola!
More flies surround her. She bats them away.

CLAIRE
Where are the groceries? Lola!
(to herself)
There’s not enough food. We’re not going to have enough.

She looks down at the gas mask. Contemplates.

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY
Claire erratically pushes a cart down the aisle, her face covered with the gas mask as the baby screams.
This is insanity. This is Claire, full force.

MARLA (O.S.)
Claire?
She spins around to see Marla and Bill, their eyes wide.

CLAIRE
You better hurry. It’s all going to be gone and then we’re really going to be in trouble.

MARLA
Wait, Claire, what are you--

Bill pulls Marla back, shakes his head as Claire takes off.
MARLA
Oh, Bill, what’s happening?

BILL
Just close your eyes, darling.
Just close your eyes.

He grips her hand in his as they watch the terrible degradation before them.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sydney enters. Walks past the kitchen, where Claire is stacking food, preparing for the inevitable.

CLARE
(to herself)
We have all these supplies and a new look, that’s all we need.
Everything is going to be fine.
Everything is going to be okay.

Sydney slowly makes her way into the...

BATHROOM

Sydney runs the water. Slips out of her clothes and into the bath.

She sinks her head underneath the water. Screams.

BEGIN FANTASY

The lights flicker off in the kitchen, leaving Claire in darkness.

She tries the switch. Nothing. She looks up at the only source of light, coming from Sydney’s bedroom.

CLARE
Henry?

She starts up the stairs just as the TV goes on in the living room behind her. She turns.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
Breaking news! The atomic bomb has hit. We go now to the Pres--
ON THE TV

Static and then PRESIDENT EISENHOWER appears, nervously holding a piece of paper as he stares solemnly ahead.

PRESENT EISENHOWER (V.O.)
The moment we have all feared is upon us. Emergency vehicles have been dispersed. At this point we--

(static)
If you have a bomb shelter or other accommodations--

(static)
I repeat, “this is not a drill”!

A blast takes out the picture.

PRESENT EISENHOWER (O.S.)
God help us, get the--

The TV switches to American cities being incinerated.

Buildings fall to the ground. People scream as they try to escape the destruction.

END FANTASY - BACK TO DINING ROOM

Claire dives under the dining room table, clutching her gas mask onto her face. She begins mumbling.

HALLWAY

Sydney robotically walks out of the bathroom. Starts towards her room, but stops when she hears Claire mumbling indistinctly below.

She descends the stairs.

DINING ROOM

Claire’s ramblings become clearer as Syndey cautiously approaches the table.

CLaire (O.S.)
The moment we have all feared is upon us.... They gave us signs...
Bomb shelter #9... Fallout Shelter in Basement... They were signs everywhere... This is not a drill...
Sydney lifts up the tablecloth to find Claire rocking back and forth, her uneven hair framing the old gas mask.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
This is not a drill!

SYDNEY
What are you doing?

CLAIRE
It's happening, just like I said.
(grabs her)
Are you prepared?

SYDNEY
(struggles)
Let me go.

Through the gas mask, she watches as Sydney’s face begins to melt. Claire’s eyes widen as she loosens her grip.

CLAIRE
It’s too late. The radiation... it's already gotten to you.

SYDNEY
You’re crazy, absolutely insane...

CLAIRE
It doesn't matter where you go, they're always going to be able to find us!

Sydney lets go of the tablecloth, concealing Claire.

A match strikes behind her.

HENRY (O.S.)
(reads; gravelly)
“Nightingale Essay”, by Sydney Mitchell...

She turns to find Henry puffing on his pipe as he reads off a stack of papers, drunk.

HENRY
When I first started to write this, I wasn’t sure if I qualified. You use the word “deserving”...

She tries to grab it. He snatches it away.
HENRY
Now wait, hold on. This is good.
(reads)
The meaning of which has always
perplexed me. What do we deserve?
And how does deserving anything
make us exempt from anything at
all?

SYDNEY
Don’t.

HENRY
Well, don’t keep me in suspense.
What do you think you deserve, huh?

SYDNEY
You have no right--

HENRY
I have every right to know what my
daughter’s intentions are. It
affects me.
(hit the papers)
This affects me!

SYDNEY
What are you going to do?

HENRY
Maybe I’ll throw it in the trash...

SYDNEY
No, please, don’t.
(pleading)
I could stay in state. I haven’t
chosen a school yet--

HENRY
It’s a big state, where are you
going to go?

SYDNEY
Not far... Close enough to visit.

HENRY
And what, be one of those fast
secretaries in the city, do you
know what men think about them?

SYDNEY
There are different programs, I
could be a nurse or--
HENRY
  (scoffs)
  A nurse.

He thumbs through the essay. Tears the first page, slowly as he watches her.

SYDNEY
  I’ll stay! Just let me turn it in so I can continue my studies. I’ll stay at home, I promise.

HENRY
  You wouldn’t leave?

She shakes her head, hopeful.

He strikes a match, pondering. Puts it to his cigar, lighting it.

SYDNEY
  Please.

He takes a puff before igniting the essay with the match. He throws it to the ground.

SYDNEY
  No!

Sydney dives for it. She struggles to squash the fire with her bare hands.

HENRY
  You’re not going anywhere and nothing you say or write, will ever change that!

SYDNEY
  You’re a monster.

HENRY
  I’m your father.

She gathers the half-burnt essay and heads to the door as Henry’s voice follows her.

HENRY
  What does it matter anyway? Run away big city girl, let’s see how far you get!

He collapses back in his chair as the baby starts crying in the distance.
Ms. Corbin opens her door to find Sydney slumped in a chair, holding the burnt essay, her hands covered in ash.

MS. CORBIN
Ms. Mitchell, what are you doing here?
   (goes to her)
Oh my god, what happened?

SYDNEY
I came to turn my essay in.
   (holds it up)
It’s all there. I checked, every word, it’s still there.

MS. CORBIN
I don’t understand, didn’t your father tell you?

SYDNEY
My father?

MS. CORBIN
He took you out of school this morning--

SYDNEY
But, the scholarship--

MS. CORBIN
Is contingent on your enrollment...

SYDNEY
No. No, I did what you told me to do--

MS. CORBIN
And you did an amazing job. Just the fact that you tried, woman all around the world will commend you for your efforts--

SYDNEY
To hell with the women around the world! What about me, don’t I count for anything?

MS. CORBIN
You’re young. There will be other things--
Don’t say that. Don’t act like there are other options now, because you know that’s not true.

Hey, come on, I’m on your side.

Ms. Corbin pulls Sydney into her arms.

I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Sydney.

Sydney closes her eyes, the tears coming as the “Duck and Cover” alarm begins to sound.

Sydney walks past students laying on the ground, reminiscent of the blown up dummies as they do the drill.

Sydney opens the bottle of Clarkotabs. Empty. She turns when something hits her window.

She pulls the curtain back. Looks down at Kevin.

Hey.

Hey.

I heard what happened. It’s all bullshit, fuck the system.

I’m sure Tammy’s happy.

Who knows, I haven’t talked to her.

I thought you two were an item.

It’s stupid. I figured maybe if I hung around her, I could find a way to make you change your mind.
SYDNEY
About what?

KEVIN
Talking to me. At least to say goodbye.

SYDNEY
You’re really leaving?

KEVIN
My old man is supposed to take me down to the recruitment station in the morning. Got to get out of town tonight.

SYDNEY
Good for you.

KEVIN
I want you to come with me.

SYDNEY
Kevin.

KEVIN
Just hear me out, what do you got to lose? You stay here and--

SYDNEY
Or I go out there and mess it up like everything else I try to do.

KEVIN
So, we mess it up together. At least you’re taking a chance.

A knock comes at the door.

HENRY (O.S.)
Princess?

SYDNEY
My father.

KEVIN
Come with me.

HENRY (O.S.)
I just want to talk.

SYDNEY
You have to go.
KEVIN
I’m not leaving without you.

The doorknob jiggles against the chair that Sydney has propped underneath it.

HENRY (O.S.)
Why is this door locked? Sydney--

SYDNEY
Please, just go.

KEVIN
No. There’s something different about you and if there isn’t, then maybe I’m wrong about myself and I just couldn’t live with that.

HENRY (O.S.)
Who are you talking to? Open the door, now!

KEVIN
You were the one that wondered if people fake happiness, but that doesn’t have to be you. That doesn’t have to be your life.

HENRY
Sydney!

She stares at the door as it vibrates.

HALLWAY

Henry forces the door open. Looks around the empty room. Watches out the window as Sydney and Kevin run to the car.

He picks up her dog tags up off the desk. Seethes.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Kevin’s convertible car tears down the street.

KEVIN’S CAR

Sydney pulls herself up in the seat. Hollers as Kevin laughs beside her.

SYDNEY
Woohoo!
He grins. Pushes the gas, accelerating them.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Through a smoky haze, a jazz musician pumps his cheeks as he blows into a horn passionately.

Over to Sydney and Kevin who are dancing amongst a crowd of society’s outcasts.

SYDNEY
I didn’t know places like this even existed.

KEVIN
Wait until we get out of state, that’ll really blow your mind.

Sydney tries to keep up. Looks around, self consciously, her steps betraying her childish pop obsession.

KEVIN
There’s nothing to it, okay? The trick is to not give a damn. Here, start with a snap.

He snaps his fingers. She follows.

KEVIN
Keep it casual. Even a hand in the pocket works.

SYDNEY
I don’t have pockets.

KEVIN
Well then, I’m sorry, this is just not going to work.

SYDNEY
Be serious.

KEVIN
All you have to do is just feel the music...

He brings her hand to his heart as he moves.

KEVIN
Right here. Ba-boom.

KEVIN (CONT’D)  SYDNEY
KEVIN
Give a little attitude, like you know what you’re doing.

She makes an overly confident face as she tries to get into it, Kevin lazily moving to the beat beside her.

KEVIN
There you go, you got it.

She starts to feel it. He takes her in, her innocence enchanting him. He grins. She’s magnificent.

Sydney lets the smoke embrace her, suspending her in time, as everything else falls away.

It seems like only seconds but when she opens her eyes she finds the environment has changed. The smoke is now suffocating, the music overwhelming, and Kevin is nowhere to be found.

She loses her balance. Stumbles into someone as things get blurry.

SOMEONE
Hey, be cool!

SYDNEY
Kevin?

On the other side, Kevin sees her struggling from the distance. Fights the crowd that has closed in between them.

KEVIN
(over music)
Sydney!

Back with Sydney, things are warped. Turned upside down. Her vision closes in as she almost collides with WINTER, an eclectic woman with a kind face.

WINTER
Hey, you okay?
(distorted)
I recognize that look. Come on.

She throws Sydney’s arm over her shoulder. The crowd parts as they move through.

SYDNEY
Where is he, where’d he go?

WINTER
Who?
Sydney tries to speak again, but the words won’t come.

Kevin spots her just as they go into the bathroom. He rushes after them.

    KEVIN
    Sydney!

A FEMALE PATRON stops him. She is pure feminist and is not budging.

    FEMALE PATRON
    Are you lost? Read the sign, buddy, “female”. Is there anywhere that you men don’t think you have jurisdiction over?

    KEVIN
    My girlfriend--

    FEMALE PATRON
    Your girlfriend, as in you own her?

    KEVIN
    No, of course not. I just want to check on her, okay?

    FEMALE PATRON
    I don’t think so. Now step back before I scream.

    KEVIN
    You’re kidding me.

    FEMALE PATRON
    Do I look like someone who likes to tell jokes?

He takes her in. Accesses. Begrudgingly steps back.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

Kevin stares down at his watch impatiently. He turns back to the bathroom entrance to see Sydney coming out with Winter by her side.

Sydney hurries over, giving him an enthusiastic hug.

    KEVIN
    I turned around and you were gone, what happened?
SYDNEY
Oh, it was nothing. Got a little dizzy is all.

KEVIN
Are you sure, you looked like--

SYDNEY
I’m fine. In fact, I’m better than fine.

She turns to Winter as if they share an inside joke.

SYDNEY
Right?

WINTER
Nothing that a little pick me up couldn’t cure.

SYDNEY
This is Winter.

WINTER
So you’re Prince Charming, huh? Maybe keep a better eye on her, this crowd can apathetic at best. (singsong) Have fun.

She takes off.

SYDNEY
Oh, will you listen to that music? I get it now, I totally understand. (raises her arms, moves) I feel like I’m floating.

KEVIN
You’re high, aren’t you?

SYDNEY
(playfully)
You disapprove?

KEVIN
No, I mean, I guess not... Do you know how long I stood out here?

SYDNEY
You’re so cute when you’re mad.

KEVIN
I’m not mad, I was worried.
SYDNEY
Well, like a wise woman in the bathroom once said, “I got something that’ll make you feel better.”

She pulls out a folded piece of paper. Opens it, revealing a stash of white powder.

SYDNEY
Come on, be a balloon with me.

He takes her in, concerned but intrigued.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Kevin snorts a line. Sydney snorts a line. The musician raises his horn in the air, making love to it.

- Sydney, Kevin, Winter, and her band of misfits dance with so much fervor that it almost seems magical.

- The group throws back shooters.

- Sydney kisses Kevin innocently. He indulges.

- White powder travels up all of their noses. The group celebrates.

- Another round of drinks. They slam down the glasses.

- Intoxicated, Sydney and Kevin try to dance. It’s useless. They laugh.

- Sydney and Kevin make out intensely against a wall.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Winter interrupts them.

WINTER
Hey lovebirds, we’re going out to the roof.
   (gestures at the bar)
   Grab a bottle on your way up.

Sydney turns to Kevin. Shrugs, mischievously.
They scramble up the stairs, bottle in hand, behind the group as the door is thrust open.

Sydney and Kevin watch as the rest run like children into the night. It’s chaos. It’s madness. It’s brilliant.

They grin at each other, before joining them.


GUY #1
I mean, what is communism, really? Sharing, man. Giving to the common people. I, myself, don’t adhere to any particular political beliefs, but you got to wonder, what are they so scared of, you know?

WOMAN #1 diverts their attention, their eyes red and droopy.

WOMAN #1
And why shouldn’t a woman be able to make decisions about her own body? They’re our bodies, after all.

GUY #2
Music, I guess it’s a feeling. No, more of movement, you know, towards our feelings.

GUY #3
Clifford Brown, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, now those were some cool cats.

GUY #2
Like crazy, man.

WOMAN #2 dances up.

WOMAN #2
Time for button, button, who’s got the button.
She opens her palm, revealing an assortment of pills.

      KEVIN
What are they?

      WOMAN #2
Well, some of them are cool and some of them are really cool.

      SYDNEY
How do you know which is which?

      WOMAN #2
That’s the game, make your choice.

      WINTER
I think they’ve had enough. Ease up.

      SYDNEY
I’ll play.

      KEVIN
Me, too.

They chose. Pop them with the rest of the group.

ROOFTOP - LATER

Sydney and Kevin peer over the edge at the bustling city, the crowd still active behind them.

      SYDNEY
Can you feel it? All this energy and we’re right in the middle of it.

      KEVIN
We’re on our way, aren’t we?

      SYDNEY
We sure are.

      KEVIN
So, where to next?

      SYDNEY
Oh, I don’t know... New York?

      KEVIN
I heard they have buildings that reach so high into the sky that you can’t even see the top.
SYDNEY
We can stay until new year’s and watch the ball drop.

KEVIN
Central Park.

Sydney pulls Kevin into a spin as they grow more excited.

SYDNEY
We can have a picnic under the trees.

KEVIN
Coney Island--

SYDNEY
Broadway!

They fall onto a couch on the side that has seen better days. She dumps the powder out. Lines them up in perfect symmetry.

SYDNEY
Look at them, the perfect little picket fence.

KEVIN
The all American dream.

SYDNEY
Not my dream.

She breathes in the white powder. Offers it to him.

KEVIN
Maybe we should slow down a little bit.

SYDNEY
Never took you for a quitter. But, if it’s too much--

KEVIN
Move over.

She does. He leans down. Snorts.

KEVIN
Woo! How about Vegas?

SYDNEY
Ooh, Vegas. Can we see Frank Sinatra?
KEVIN
I was thinking more like Blackjack,
maybe some slots.

She teasingly unbuttons her blouse. Moves towards him.

SYDNEY
I would really like to see Frank Sinatra.

KEVIN
Frank Sinatra, I can dig it.

SYDNEY
And then Blackjack.

She climbs on his lap. Starts to take his shirt off.

KEVIN
And after that, maybe more Frank Sinatra. Whatever you want.

SYDNEY
You promise?

KEVIN
I swear.

They come together, disappearing into the couch.

ROOFTOP – EARLY MORNING

Sydney awakens, raising her head off Kevin’s lap on the old couch. He moans softly. She shivers.

SYDNEY
I think we might have overdone it.

She pulls her clothes on as a low, menacing rumble sounds in the distance.

She stares down at the bleak city, the dark clouds above struggling to engulf the sun.

SYDNEY
Maybe Florida, huh? We can go down to the beach and just lie in the sun. I’ve always wanted to do that, what do you think?

She turns to Kevin, whose head is resting on his shoulder. She smiles. Goes to him. Gently shakes him.
SYDNEY
Hey, sleepyhead, time to get going.
(shakes him harder)
Kevin, wake up.

He falls to the side but doesn’t respond. She hesitantly rolls him over. He begins to seize. She pulls away.

SYDNEY
Quit messing around. I mean it, it’s not funny.

She grabs him. Holds him tight as the shaking continues.

SYDNEY
Okay, you’re okay. Hey, hey, hey, you’re okay.

He grows limp in her arms. She looks down at the blood running out of his nose. Wipes it.

SYDNEY
Wake up, Kevin, just open your eyes. You can do it, just a peek. Please, don’t do this. Don’t do this... please!

She clutches him. Calls over to the formerly active crowd of misfits. The ones that aren’t passed out are vacant and useless.

SYDNEY
Hey, something’s wrong. Something’s wrong with him. I... I don’t know what to do...

The crowd turns. Murmur to one another, but do nothing.

SYDNEY
Why are you all just sitting there? Help us!
(screams)
Why won’t you do something?

The clouds win, completely darkening the sky as the city swallows them up.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB - DAY

Rain pours down on Sydney as she watches the coroner zip up the body bag and put Kevin into a stale, lifeless van.
CORONER
(low; to paramedic)
Take her home, I bet her parents
are worried sick.

She watches vacantly as his car is hooked up to a tow truck
and pulled away.

ON THE TV – FLASHBACK

World War II plays out in black and white as bombs drop to
the ground around U.S. Soldiers.

YOUNG HENRY, early 20s, turns to his COMRADE, trying to speak
over the blast.

YOUNG HENRY
They’ve got us surrounded, I need
more ammo!

COMRADE
There ain’t none, the whole platoon
ran out on the way over here.

YOUNG HENRY
What about the other guys, where
are they?

COMRADE
Who the hell knows? Jesus Christ,
I’m fucking scared. I don’t think
I’m going to make it.

YOUNG HENRY
Don’t say that. This will all be
over soon and when we get back, the
first round of drinks are on me.

COMRADE
Yeah, a drink sounds good right
about now.

A bomb drops close to them. Young Henry ducks. Looks over
at his comrade who is frozen in a standing position.

YOUNG HENRY
Get down!

His comrade turns, a look of terror on his face. Urine drips
into a puddle at his feet.

COMRADE
I--
Henry hollers as a bomb drops, obliterating his comrade.

PRESENT DAY - THE CHANNEL CHANGES TO "FATHER KNOWS BEST"

ON THE TV

MOTHER puts down the phone. Joins BETTY, BUD, and KATHY, who are pondering over a heap of paper.

    BETTY (ON TV)
    We need help, mother.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Henry falls back into his chair. Stares at the TV as he takes a swig out of a whiskey bottle.

    MOTHER (ON TV)
    I don't see why it should be so difficult to say something nice about your father.

    BUD (ON TV)
    Then, why don't you do it for us?

    KATHY (ON TV)
    Sure mommy, you've known him longer.

    CLAIRE (O.S.)
    I tried to leave, but I couldn’t.

Henry turns to see Claire, the perfect picture of youth and beauty, at least in his blurred vision.

    HENRY
    Claire, is that you? Get me another bottle.

    CLAIRE
    Alcohol, that’s not what makes you do what you do. There’s something inside you that just isn’t right.

    HENRY
    (takes a swig, watching TV)
    Yeah, what do you know about being right?
CLAIRE
Everything I know I learned from you.

She grabs the bottle out of his hands. Takes a drink.

HENRY
Hey!

She smiles at his vulnerability before delicately kissing him on the lips. She whispers in his ear.

CLAIRE
Come on, fuck me, turn me inside out. That’s what you want, right, to have me all to yourself?

He slaps her. Hard. She falls to the ground.

HENRY
What the hell is wrong with you?

He peers down at Claire, who is clutching her face. He focuses. It’s Sydney! She rushes off.

HENRY
Sydney, wait!

Henry stumbles out his chair after her.

SYDNEY’S BEDROOM

Sydney dives into the bed, throwing the covers over her head. Peers through the thin fabric as the door opens.

HENRY
(softly)
Princess.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A dark, shadowy figure stumbles into the darkness as Sydney struggles to stay quiet under the covers.

He yanks the covers off, exposing YOUNG SYDNEY, 8 as he comes towards her with a stuffed animal.

HENRY
 Peek-a-boo, I see you!
Back to Henry, who is several years younger and clothed only in pajama pants. He is so drunk, he can barely stand.

He climbs into the bed. Pulls the covers over them both.

    YOUNG SYDNEY (O.S.)
    No, don’t...

Pan over her girly, childlike room as the grunts begin.

HALLWAY - SAME

Claire, several years younger, stands just outside Sydney’s closed bedroom door, listening, a scowl on her face.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR wraps the baby in a blanket. Walks over to Sydney, who is laying in a hospital bed, exhausted and sweaty from giving birth.

    DOCTOR
    It’s a girl!

She looks away when he tries to hand her to her.

Sydney watches out the hallway window as the doctor approaches Henry and Claire. They argue.

Claire reluctantly takes the baby as it begins to cry.

END FLASHBACK

PRESENT DAY - INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY’S BEDROOM - DAY

Henry stands. Pulls on his pants. On the other side of the bed, Sydney’s eyes flutter open as he walks into the hallway.

Then, the banging starts.

    HENRY (O.S.)
    Come on, Claire, open up.
    (bangs harder)
    Don’t make me break the door down.

A long silence and then... crash! Henry hollers.

Sydney jumps up. Stares down the hall. Henry is in full panic mode as he looks into the bathroom.
HENRY
What did you do?

She slowly moves towards Henry as he goes inside. She hears a commotion, but can’t seem to move fast enough.

HENRY
How could you be so selfish?
Goddamn you!

Sydney turns the corner. Stares at Claire’s lifeless body dangling from the shower rod as Henry fights to untie her.

HENRY
Get me something, I need to cut her down... Sydney?

Sydney’s eyes grow wide. She darts down the stairs into the...

LIVING ROOM

Sydney rushes to the front door, but muffled cries stop her. She approaches the crib and looks down at the baby, whose head is enclosed in a gas mask.

She slowly picks her up. Pulls the gas mask off. Takes her in as if looking at her for the first time.

She quickly goes to the key hook. Nothing. Digs through the side table. Not there either. Searches Henry’s jacket pocket. Bingo. Pulls the keys out.

She spins around. Comes face to face with Henry who is sweaty and unusually calm, bottle in hand.

HENRY
Got her down, even ran her a nice bath. She always did like baths. (plops down)
We’ll need to make arrangements, of course.

Sydney clutches the baby closer, causing the keys to drop. She quickly picks them up.

HENRY
What are you doing, we talked about this.

SYDNEY
You’re not calling the shots anymore.
HENRY
(struggles to stand)
Don’t you see, we don’t have to worry about her, she’s gone. She was the one driving a wedge between us and now--

SYDNEY
It was you, it’s always been you.

HENRY
No. Everything I ever did, I did for this family.

SYDNEY
You did it for yourself!

HENRY
Give me the baby.

SYDNEY
(backs away)
Stay away from us.

HENRY
Give her to me!

He slams the bottle down. Glass flies as he tries to rip the baby out of her arms. She fights him. Pulls away. Runs.

He kicks the back of her leg, causing her to go flying to the ground. She protects the baby in a fetal position as he descends upon them.

He flips her over. She kicks him. He smashes his hand into her face as they struggle. Wraps his fingers around Sydney’s throat.

HENRY
Why do you make me do this? I love you!

She beats his chest with one hand as he grips tighter. Her face turns red as she starts to lose consciousness.

He pulls the baby out of her arms as she falls to the side, trying to catch her breath.

HENRY
You’re just like her. I don’t know why I thought you’d be any different.
She spots a shard of glass. Inches her fingers towards it as he paces with the baby.

HENRY
Why can’t you listen? Is it so hard to just obey me?
(regroups)
I didn’t mean that. You’ve always been my favorite...
(turns, tears in his eyes)
You know that, right?

He goes to Sydney. Moves a hair out of her face, lovingly.

HENRY
We can make a fresh start, now. We can move away from here, go somewhere where no one knows us.
(caresses the baby)
We can be a family again.

He suddenly jolts back. Stares at her wide-eyed. Down to his bloody midsection, where a shard of glass is sticking out.

HENRY
You... You stabbed me!

She grabs the baby as he stumbles back, pulling out the glass. He laughs in disbelief.

HENRY
You really stabbed me.

Sydney rushes to the door. Struggles with it. Throws it open, freedom just feet away.

HENRY
Where are you going to go, huh? You think you’re going to go out that door and magically be someone else? You’re never going to be anything more than you are right now.

She closes her eyes, almost believing him.

HENRY
I’m the only one who knows you, that really knows you.

She turns. Gazes down at the bloody, pathetic excuse that is Henry Mitchell.
SYDNEY
Who really knows anyone?

HENRY
Sydney... Sydney!

She walks out the door as he crawls after her and collapses.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER (V.O.)
Incidentally, if you're wanting to follow some of these things off into the realm of great philosophical conjecture...

BATHROOM

The bathtub overflows, overcoming Claire’s body as we focus on her wedding ring on the sink in the foreground.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER (V.O.)
Suppose you won a war by the indiscriminate use of atomic weapons...

LIVING ROOM

Over Henry’s dead, bloody body draped across the doorway.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER (V.O.)
What would you have left?

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sydney starts the car.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER (V.O.)
The only thing I know about war are two things; the most changeable factor in war is human nature, in it's... day by day manifestation, but the only unchanging factor in war is human nature.

She looks over at the baby, who giggles. She takes a deep breath. Puts the car in reverse.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

The car drives past children, playing in the front yards in the spotless neighborhood.
Past houses where, through the open windows, we can see President Eisenhower speaking from their TV sets.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER (ON TV)
And the next thing is... that every war is going to astonish you in the way it occurred and the way its carried out.

The car continues on the open road. Turns the corner and disappears.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END