

SWELL

by

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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.

Tap, tap, tap. "Coo, coo". Sip. Sip.

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.

CLAIRE

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.

CLAIRE

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.

CLAIRE

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
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.

MS. CORBIN

Then, what is it?

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

MS. CORBIN

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

SYDNEY

Maybe they don't think they have a choice.

MS. CORBIN

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.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

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

KEVIN (O.S.)

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.

SYDNEY

I didn't know anyone else was out here.

KEVIN

Just me and you.

SYDNEY

(RE: the joint)
Aren't worried about getting in trouble?

KEVIN

Never crossed my mind.

SYDNEY

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?

SYNDEY
It's nothing.

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

SYNDEY
Well, there's this school in San
Francisco--

TAMMY
San Francisco, yeah right.

SYNDEY
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.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

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.

SYNDEY
Gas, which one is that again?
(off his look)
Joking. Joking.

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 Sydney 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.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

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

Sydney struggles to study. Closes the book. Tosses it.
It's useless. She zeros in on the Clarkotabs.

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.

END MONTAGE

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!

The attendant comes for him. Henry swings. Misses. He grabs Henry. Pushes him towards the exit as he fights.

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 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...

HALLWAY

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 whirls 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.

CLAIRE

(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.

CLAIRE

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.

PRESIDENT 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.

PRESIDENT 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 Sydney 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.

(hits 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.

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

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--

SYDNEY

Don't say that. Don't act like there are other options now, because you know that's not true.

MS. CORBIN

Hey, come on, I'm on your side.

Ms. Corbin pulls Sydney into her arms.

MS. CORBIN

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Sydney.

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

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

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

INT. HOUSE - SYDNEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

She pulls the curtain back. Looks down at Kevin.

KEVIN

Hey.

SYNDEY

Hey.

KEVIN

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

SYDNEY

I'm sure Tammy's happy.

KEVIN

Who knows, I haven't talked to her.

SYDNEY

I thought you two were an item.

KEVIN

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)

Ba-boom. Ba-boom.

SYDNEY

Ba-boom. Ba-boom.

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.

STAIRCASE

They scramble up the stairs, bottle in hand, behind the group as the door is thrust open.

ROOFTOP

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.

ROOFTOP - LATER

A joint makes its way around the group to Sydney. Puff. Choke. Puff. Pass. Kevin inhales as GUY #1 rambles on.

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.

SYNDEY

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 hesitatingly 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