

ASHLEY

(originally)

SPRAWL

by

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LOCKED

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FADE IN:

- 1 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - MORNING 1
- ASHLEY COLLINS (17), slightly tomboyish but pretty, wakes up and gets out of bed. Her room's a mess. There are sketches taped to the wall. Many of them are sketches of butterflies.
- Ashley throws on some clothes, grabs her backpack, and exits.
- 2 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 2
- A dreary old living space populated by dated furniture.
- Ashley goes over to where her mother, STACEY COLLINS (40), lies on the couch, clearly passed out from the night before. An empty bottle of Vodka lies next to her. Ashley quietly rummages through Stacey's purse.
- Ashley finds what she's looking for and exits.
- 3 EXT. PLAYGROUND - SUBURBIA - MORNING 3
- Ashley sits alone on a swing with her back pack on the ground next to her. She blankly stares at the empty park. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. She begins to slightly roll up one of her sleeves.
- On her arm are thin, pronounced scars.
- Ashley taps out on of the cigarettes and puts it in between her lips. She pockets the pack and takes out a red, diamond encrusted lighter. She burns the tip of her smoke and then takes a deep drag.
- She taps the ashes out onto the ground beside her. She brings the cigarette back to her lips. She does this a few times.
- After a moment, she closes her eyes and hovers the fiery stick over her wrist. She lets the tip make contact with her skin.
- Flesh SIZZLES.
- She's elated. Her body fills with tension and then releases.
- Her closed eyes tighten, wincing in pain.
- MANS VOICE (O.S.)
Ashley? Ashley!

4 INT. SCHOOL THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

4

Her eyes open.

MANS VOICE (O.S.)

Ashley!

Ashley lies on the couch across from VINCENT (mid 30s), sensitive and caring. He's the high school therapist.

College degrees adorn the walls.

VINCENT

Did you have a good weekend?

Ashley looks down at her hands.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

How are things at home?

ASHLEY

(almost a whisper)

Me and Stacy went shopping.

VINCENT

How's it going with your mother?

Ashley turns to the window, then looks back at her hands.

ASHLEY

We bought jeans.

VINCENT

That sounds fun.

Ashley looks back at the ceiling.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

You learning anything new in class?
Anything that you like?

No answer.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Ashley...

Ashley looks at Vincent but can't hold eye contact for too long.

ASHLEY

I'm reading Catcher in the Rye.

VINCENT

Good book. Do you like it?

Ashley quietly nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
What do you like about it?

Silence. After a few beats.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Is there anything you wanted to
talk about?

Ashley looks back to the ceiling.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Ashley?

Ashley looks at Vincent.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Nothing on your mind we can
discuss?

Silence.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Let me see your arms.

She looks away. She pulls up her sleeve for just a moment to
reveal her fresh wound.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
When did you do that?

Ashley does not respond. She remains stoic.

The bell rings and Ashley exits.

5 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

5

The classroom is an outdated teaching area with a whiteboard
and wobbly desks lined up.

Ashley sits at her desk among the OTHER STUDENTS.

She stares at a beautiful REDHEADED GIRL who sits diagonally
across from her.

The girl writes on a piece of paper. She throws her hair back
and Ashley catches a glimpse of her face.

The girl turns and looks at her. For a moment, their eyes
connect.

6 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE 6

Ashley stands beside the Redheaded Girl in the middle of the classroom. The two kiss hard. She rolls up her sleeve nearest to her. The students in the class pay no attention to what's going on.

The girl feels Ashley's cuts up and down and starts to kiss them. Ashley bites her own lip. She leans in and the two kiss again.

7 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 7

Ashley continues to stare at the Redheaded Girl. The girl turns away and goes back to talking with her friends. The bell rings. The students all get up and begin to exit the room. Ashley gets up and collects her things.

As she goes, STEVE, a blonde haired jock-type, stops her.

STEVE

Hey Ashley, how's it going?

She looks at him for a moment, then looks down.

ASHLEY

Oh, hey.

There's an awkward moment of silence. Ashley then throws her backpack over her shoulder and walks away.

STEVE

See you around?

8 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 8

We now see Stacey awake. She's got tired, far-off eyes. She sits, zombie-like on the couch, watching TV. She's drinking a large glass of white wine.

Ashley enters through the front door. Stacey takes a deep breath. She's been waiting for this:

STACEY

You been going through my shit again? Huh?

No response.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Have you?

Ashley walks over and sits down on the couch. Stacey stands up. Ashley picks up the remote and changes the channel on the TV.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Are you fucking listening to me?

Nothing. No response.

STACEY (CONT'D)
That shrink of yours called from school.

Ashley flips through the channels, not listening to a word Stacey says.

STACEY (CONT'D)
What did you do this time, you little bitch? Huh?

She doesn't listen.

STACEY (CONT'D)
He wants me to take you to some group therapy at a hospital downtown tomorrow.

Stacey grabs the remote out of Ashley's hands and turns off the TV.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Do you hear me?

Ashley stares at Stacey for a moment. Then Ashley gets up, walks over to the TV, and pushes the power switch on the TV itself, turning it back on. She then goes back to the couch.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Does he think you're crazy. Maybe you are? Huh? You need meds?

Ashley turns away.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Look at me. I don't need this shit. He said that you have another burn on your arm.

Ashley turns the TV back on.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Did you burn yourself again?

She stares Ashley down. Ashley does not look at her.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Took my lighter too, didn't ya?

Stacey turns off the TV again.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Know who gave me that?

Ashley picks up the remote and turns the TV back on.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Know who gave me that?!

Ashley turns the volume on the TV up.

Stacey throws her wine glass at Ashley and nearly hits her.
Ashley blocks her face.

Stacey storms out of the room.

Ashley continues to stare at the TV, expressionless.

9 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

9

A neat and clean area lined with chairs and framed pictures of inspiring phrases.

Ashley sits next to Stacey. CLASSICAL MUSIC plays over the speakers.

Stacey is calmer... sober now. As sober as she gets.

VARIOUS PEOPLE wait, including a YOUNG MOTHER (early 20s) and her LITTLE DAUGHTER (9).

The little daughter plays a handheld game which emits loud gunshot noises. Stacey peers over at the young family. Ashley stares at the ground.

The Young Mother is writing a check. She turns to her daughter and grabs her arm.

YOUNG MOTHER
Turn that off. There are people in here.

The little daughter tugs her arm loose and continues to play.

LITTLE DAUGHTER
Pow, pow, pow! Pow!

The mother again takes hold of her arm.

YOUNG MOTHER

Shhh!

The daughter tugs her arm loose and moves over a seat.

LITTLE DAUGHTER

Pow! Die motherfucker!

The mother gets up.

YOUNG MOTHER

All right. That's it.

Ashley covers her mouth to hide a grin.

The Young Mother pulls her daughter out of her seat.

LITTLE DAUGHTER

Hey!

YOUNG MOTHER

Hey?!

The Young Mother drops the check at the counter, then drags her daughter to the door.

The daughter continues to play the game as she is taken away.

LITTLE DAUGHTER

Stop it. You're hurting me!

YOUNG MOTHER

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just wait till we get home, you little...

She exits with the daughter behind her.

Stacey sighs.

A NURSE enters.

NURSE

Ashley.

Stacey gets up.

STACEY

Come on.

Ashley gets up.

Stacey straightens up her daughter as if she were still a little girl.

STACEY (CONT'D)
 Try to hear what they're saying to
 you, Ashley.

10 INT. HOSPITAL - GROUP ROOM - DAY

10

Ashley sits amongst five other TEENS and the group moderator, an astute looking woman with glasses, DR. SARAH HALL. A large ORDERLY stands against the wall, arms folded.

Ashley looks down at the ground. She's somewhere else.

DR. HALL (O.S.)
 ...Ashley?

Ashley continues to look down.

DR. HALL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Ashley?

Ashley finally becomes present and looks up.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)
 I asked if you're going to
 participate.

Ashley looks around at the five teens that surround her.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)
 You don't have anything to say?

ASHLEY
 No.

DR. HALL
 You know, there's no point in being
 here if you're not going to
 participate.

ASHLEY
 (under her breath)
 I didn't choose to be here.

DR. HALL
 How do you expect to address your
 problems if you can't talk about
 them?

JAMES, a muscular teen boy with a no-nonsense attitude,
 interrupts.

JAMES

Lay off her. That's all you do.
Push us to talk. Maybe some of us
ain't got shit to say.

DR. HALL

I recall you having a lot to say.

JAMES

Maybe *she* doesn't.

DR. HALL

It's not your turn to talk, James.
It's Ashley's turn.

Dr. Hall turns back to Ashley.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)

Why don't you tell us about
yourself, Ashley?

Ashley looks down at the floor.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)

It's okay. You can be open here.
(beat)
Come on. Tell us about yourself.

Ashley remains silent.

JAMES

She doesn't want to talk. Fuck!

DR. HALL

Can we cut the swearing?

JAMES

We? I'm the only one fucking
swearing.

DR. HALL

If you're not going to...

James erupts.

JAMES

This is bullshit. Pointless
bullshit!

DR. HALL

Okay! You need to stop now.

James jumps to his feet.

JAMES
Fuck you!

DR. HALL
Sit back down...

James knocks over his chair. The Orderly comes over.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)
All right!

Dr. Hall stands up and walks over to James to escort him out.

DR. HALL (CONT'D)
Let's go. I'll be right back.

The Orderly grabs James by the arm to show him out. James breaks free.

JAMES
Don't fucking touch me!

The Orderly grabs James' arm again, but this time, he instantly pins it behind his back.

The Orderly pushes James to the door. Dr. Hall addresses the group.

DR. HALL
Stay put.

She turns and follows James and the Orderly out the door.

TRACEY, a skinny female with a big grin, laughs. The remaining group all turn and stare at Ashley.

Tracey leans forward.

TRACEY
Don't worry. Happens every time.

Tracey smiles. Ashley looks at the ground.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
Why don't you talk?

No answer.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm not gonna bite...
unless you want me too.

Ashley slightly smiles.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
That's better.

Tracey chuckles and sits back.

11 INT. STACEY'S CAR - DAY

11

Stacey drives while Ashley rides passenger.

STACEY
The Doctor told me you didn't say
peep. The whole session. This was
it. The last time. Driving you to
a goddamn hospital in the middle of
the goddamn day, you little bitch.

Ashley stares at her feet.

STACEY (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you?

Ashley stares blankly out the window.

STACEY (CONT'D)
(to herself)
This is bullshit. I'm late for
work, and I'm dropping your ass at
school...

12 EXT. PLAYGROUND - EARLY EVENING

12

It's starting to get dark. Ashley sits on the swing, alone,
drawing in her sketch pad. She puts down her pad and pulls
out a cigarette. She sparks it up with her red diamond
lighter.

VICKY (O.S.)
That's a nice lighter.

Ashley looks up to see a young girl, VICKY, about her age.
Vicky smiles down at her.

ASHLEY
What?

VICKY
I said, that's a nice lighter.

ASHLEY
My dad gave it to me.

VICKY
Your dad gave you a lighter?

Ashley looks down at the ground.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Can I sit?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

Vicky takes a seat on the swing next to her. She pulls out a cigarette and turns to Ashley.

VICKY
I'm Vicky.

ASHLEY
(quietly)
Ashley.

VICKY
Can I get a light, Ashley?

Ashley hands Vicky the lighter. Vicky sparks up her smoke and looks the lighter over.

VICKY (CONT'D)
This is really cool.

Vicky hands back the lighter to Ashley.

Vicky stares up and down at Ashley, which makes Ashley completely uncomfortable.

VICKY (CONT'D)
What's that in your pocket?

Ashley reaches into her pocket and pulls out a butterfly knife. She flips it open.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Whoa. Can I see that?

Ashley hands it to her. Vicky checks it out, feeling the tip.

VICKY (CONT'D)
SO cool. Your dad give you this too?

ASHLEY
I bought it.

VICKY
Kickass! I like it.

Vicky hands Ashley back her knife. Ashley flips it closed and pockets it.

VICKY (CONT'D)
You go to school around here?

Ashley doesn't respond.

VICKY (CONT'D)
I'm home-schooled. My parents are
away right now. Want to come over?

Ashley just looks at the ground.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Want to?

Ashley hesitates. Vicky gets up.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Come on.

Ashley looks around. Vicky pulls Ashley up and they walk off.

13 INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

13

Vicky and Ashley enter through the front door. Vicky leads Ashley over to the couch area where three teens sit.

A large teen, WILL, wears a T-shirt that reads "I FUCK ON THE FIRST DATE". Another large teen, WANDA, wears a shirt that reads "HOW DARE YOU ASSUME I'D RATHER BE THIN". A skinny teen, PHIL, wears a shirt that simply reads "CUNT".

They all drink from plastic cups.

WILL, WANDA, & PHIL
Hey.

VICKY
This is Wanda, Phil, and Will...

Ashley forces a tiny smile and nods.

WANDA
Where're you finding new friends,
home-schoolie?

VICKY
At the kid's playground. I've seen
her hanging there.

WANDA
Oh, you're the girl always smoking
there when I walk by.

Ashley looks at the ground.

PHIL
Hey, at least you found a good-
looking friend. Only fat bitches
here.

WANDA
Shut the fuck up, Phil. No one
wants your skinny ass.

PHIL
More than they want your fat...

WILL
Shut the fuck up, Phil.

PHIL
Suck it, Will.

WILL
Fuck you.

Ashley stares at the floor.

VICKY
Hey! You're stressing out Ashley!
(to Ashley)
They're just messing around...
retards.

Ashley lifts her head up.

WILL
What's the matter?

PHIL
Yeah, you look ass-raped.

WANDA
Shut up, Phil!

WILL
Cheer her up, Wanda.

WANDA
What?

WILL
Cheer her up.

WANDA
Good idea. Hey, Ashley. Ashley!

Ashley looks up at Wanda.

Wanda flashes her large breasts.

Will and Phil burst out laughing.

VICKY
Oh, come on! She didn't need to see that.

Ashley grins for a moment.

WANDA
See! She smiled! She smiled!

Ashley looks back down at the ground.

VICKY
No, no, no. Look up here.

Vicky lifts Ashley's head up.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Let me take your jacket, cutie.

Ashley is reluctant at first but then lets her take it. As Vicky takes off Ashley's jacket it catches on the sleeve of Ashley's shirt and pulls it up.

Wanda catches sight of Ashley's scarred arm. Ashley quickly rolls her sleeve back down.

WANDA
Whoa... what's with your arm, girl?

Ashley freezes.

PHIL
What?

WANDA
Look at her arm!
(to Ashley)
Roll your sleeve up.

Ashley looks down at the ground.

VICKY
What are you talking about?

WANDA
Take a look at her arm!

WILL
What?

VICKY
What's wrong with your arm, Ashley?

Ashley looks away.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Don't be shy.

PHIL
Show us.

WILL
Yeah, come on.

Vicky gently takes hold of Ashley's arm. Ashley looks at Vicky.

VICKY
Is it okay?

Ashley hesitantly nods. Vicky rolls up Ashley's sleeve.

WILL, WANDA, & PHIL
(in unison)
Whoa!

VICKY
What happened?

Ashley tugs her arm back.

WILL
You're all cut up! Did you used to date Freddy Kruger or something?

PHIL
Bad joke, dude.

WANDA
You're one of those, aren't you?
Shit, that's the worst I've seen.
Crazy bitch.

Ashley gets up and walks away to the corner of the room. Vicky gets up and walks over to her. Ashley is on the verge of tears.

WANDA (CONT'D)
You sure pick 'em, Vick!

VICKY
Shut the fuck up, okay?

Wanda gets to her feet.

WANDA
Don't tell me to shut the fuck up!

Will gets up.

WILL
Vick, you're the one who brought
this crazy bitch...

Vicky claps her hands together loudly.

VICKY
Everyone get out.

WANDA
Girl, don't you play...

VICKY
Get out!

Phil laughs to himself, shakes his head, then stands up and walks right out the door.

WILL
Come on, Wanda.

WANDA
Whatever.

Will and Wanda exit.

Ashley holds her head in her hands. She's crying.

VICKY
No, no, no. Don't...

Vicky takes Ashley's hands and kisses them.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Don't.

Ashley wipes her nose.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 Sorry. I shouldn't have...

Ashley leans in and kisses Vicky on the lips. Vicky kisses back. They pull away from each other.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 Sorry for them.

She kisses Ashley again.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 You have a computer? We can talk online.

Ashley nods.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 My screen name's SapphoGirl3.

ASHLEY
 Sappho?

VICKY
 Girl3, yeah.

Ashley rolls up one of her sleeves and itches her arm. Vicky catches sight of the scars.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 So... you did this to yourself?

ASHLEY
 Kinda.

VICKY
 Kinda? I mean, no one did that to you, right?

Ashley shakes her head "no."

Vicky gently grabs Ashley's arm.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 Wow.

Vicky runs her fingers down Ashley's cuts. Ashley closes her eyes.

VICKY (CONT'D)
 How did...?

Ashley emits a soft MOAN. Vicky lets go.

VICKY (CONT'D)

You okay?

Ashley doesn't respond.

VICKY (CONT'D)

You want me to do it again?

Ashley nods. Vicky hesitantly reaches out and touches her arm again.

Vicky strokes the scars. Ashley is in heaven.

ASHLEY

Oh!

VICKY

Does...doesn't it hurt?

ASHLEY

Yes.

Vicky reaches out and caresses Ashley's scars. Vicky then bends over and kisses the scars, then kisses up her arm, and then kisses Ashley on the lips.

Ashley hesitates for a moment, but then kisses back. As they kiss, Vicky continues to stroke her scars.

Ashley pulls away and takes out her butterfly knife. She opens it. Vicky looks at it hesitantly. Ashley takes hold of Vicky's arm and touches the blade to it. Ashley gently runs it down her forearm. Vicky backs away.

VICKY

I can't.

ASHLEY

Why not?

VICKY

I'm sorry.

ASHLEY

I...

Suddenly, Vicky seems very anxious.

VICKY

You should go...

Ashley stares at her.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Please.

Ashley continues to stand and stare.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Go!

Ashley slowly turns around and heads out the door.

14 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

14

Ashley lies on her bed with her slightly out of date laptop on her lap. The screen displays a chat website.

She scrolls down the list of chatters until she comes upon "SAPPHOGIRL3". She double clicks on the name and a dialogue box pops up.

She types in the box and hits enter.

BLEEP!

HOMESTARCH99

Hey.

SAPPHOGIRL3

A/S/L?

Straight-faced, Ashley types on the keyboard and enters it.

HOMESTARCH99

18/female/noyb.

SAPPHOGIRL3

Ha. Same age as me, girl. What you into?

Ashley types.

HOMESTARCH99

Whatever U R.

SAPPHOGIRL3

LOL. Not givin me much to work with...

HOMESTARCH99

I do what you want.

SAPPHOGIRL3

Get you off?

Ashley remains stone-faced.

HOMESTARCH99
Yourself off too?

SAPPHOGIRL3
Bring your hand down with me.

Ashley remains still. She just types. She doesn't act.

HOMESTARCH99
Doing it.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Tell me how it feels.

HOMESTARCH99
Good, feels good.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Tell me more.

HOMESTARCH99
It's wet.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Cum with me.

Ashley sits perfectly still. She just types.

HOMESTARCH99
Yes.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Fuck yes.

HOMESTARCH99
I'm rubbing.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Rub slow.

HOMESTARCH99
Yes.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Oh yes.

HOMESTARCH99
Yes.

SAPPHOGIRL3
Nice.

Ashley exits out of the chat site and closes her computer. She sets it on the ground beside her bed. She sits up, pulls out her knife, and flips it open.

She puts the blade to her arm and holds it there. Then, slowly, she slices into her arm above her highest scar. She closes her eyes and bites her lip.

Her body fills with tension and then releases.

15 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - LATER

15

Stacey enters, with a phone pressed against her head, as Ashley lies in bed, sketching with pencil on a sketch pad.

STACEY
(on the phone)
Yes...
(listening)
Okay.

Stacey throws a shirt onto the bed.

STACEY (CONT'D)
I'm returning...
(listening)
...yeah, um...

Stacey sighs.

STACEY (CONT'D)
I don't have a receipt.

Stacey walks over to Ashley's dresser and begins looking through it with one hand. Ashley continues to draw, almost as if she's oblivious to what's going on.

STACEY (CONT'D)
I don't know. Can't you take it
back without it?

Stacey slams the dresser drawer shut.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Great. Just fuckin' great. I was
just there other day with my
daughter. Thanks for nothing,
asshole.

Stacey hangs up the phone.

STACEY (CONT'D)
 Will you ever be helpful? And for
 God's sake, clean up this shit pile
 of a room.

Ashley ignores her and continues to draw. Stacey slaps the
 book out of her hands.

STACEY (CONT'D)
 Listen to me, you little bitch. You
 don't start responding to me and
 I'll take your precious little
 computer out of here and you won't
 have nothing!

Stacey goes over to Ashley's laptop and starts to pick it up.
 Ashley, desperate, stands up. Finally:

ASHLEY
 Don't take it, please!
 (beat)
 I'm sorry, mother.

Stacey lets this sink in. Then:

STACEY
 That's more like it.

Ashley avoids her mom's eyes.

STACEY (CONT'D)
 I'm going out. This room better be
 clean when I get home.

Stacey exits.

Ashley takes a deep breath, gets up and begins to clean her
 room.

16 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT 16

It's late, and Ashley emerges from her bedroom. Faint sounds
 are heard... the TV in the background. Ashley walks down the
 stairs.

Stacey is sitting on the couch with a photo album on her lap.
 She flips through the pages. She holds a cocktail.

Ashley walks up behind her and peers down over her shoulder.
 She looks at a picture that features Stacey and Ashley, both
 much younger, together with a STRONG, SMILING MAN.

Stacey smiles at the picture. Ashley stares at the picture, stone-faced.

Stacey closes the book, sets it down, and gets up. She turns around and stares at Ashley, startled. Stacey is tipsy.

STACEY
What are you doing?

Ashley doesn't respond.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Huh?

ASHLEY
Can't sleep.

Stacey pushes Ashley aside and stumbles upstairs. Ashley sits on the couch and looks at the photo album. She picks it up and opens it to the picture. She looks at her mom, herself, and the muscular, smiling man.

She stares at it and remains stone-faced.

17 INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY 17

Ashley sits at a table, alone. She eats a granola bar as she daydreams.

Three girls, CARLY, SAMMY, and SUMMER, approach her with their lunch trays.

CARLY
Hey... Ashley, right?

Ashley looks up at her and just stares.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Can we sit?

Ashley swallows a piece of her granola bar and nods. The girls sit.

CARLY (CONT'D)
It's you, right?

Ashley looks down at the table.

CARLY (CONT'D)
It's me, Carly.

Ashley looks at her.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 Carly, Sammy, and Summer. Fifth
 grade, remember?

Ashley just stares at them.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 Really?

SAMMY
 I like your shirt.

Ashley looks down at her shirt. Carly looks at Ashley's
 shirt.

CARLY
 Oh, yeah. Nice. New?

Ashley nods.

SUMMER
 Where'd you get it?

Ashley looks at her granola bar.

ASHLEY
 (almost a whisper)
 I don't remember.

Carly, Sammy, and Summer look at each other and then turn
 back to Ashley.

CARLY
 How 'bout ditching class?

Carly smiles at Ashley. She reaches her hand across the
 table and places it on Ashley's arm.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 Meet us out back next period.

Ashley looks down at Carly's hand on her arm. Carly pushes
 her sleeve back. Ashley pulls away. Carly, Sammy, and Summer
 all smile at Ashley and get up. They walk away. Ashley
 watches them go.

Ashley pulls her sleeve back and puts the granola bar down.

18 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - BACK ALLEY - DAY

18

Ashley walks out through a set of doors. She looks around and
 sees nothing but trash littered around a large dumpster.

She walks forward.

SHE SUDDENLY GETS PUSHED DOWN FROM BEHIND.

Ashley's face slams into the ground. She attempts to lift herself up. A foot sweeps her arms out from under her. Ashley falls flat on her face again.

Someone rolls Ashley onto her back. Ashley looks up and sees Carly, Sammy, and Summer standing over her.

They all hold items such as food and metal cans. Ashley stares blankly at the three of them. Carly grabs a bag of garbage from the dumpster. She pours it onto Ashley.

Ashley doesn't even shield herself from the trash.

CARLY
You like pain?

Sammy and Summer look down at her. Sammy leans over her and smears food onto her face.

Ashley just lets her do it.

SAMMY
Like to wear scars?

Summer throws a can at Ashley's stomach. Ashley winces.

SUMMER
Fucking freak.

Carly, Sammy, and Summer look at each other, then down at Ashley. They begin to kick her. Ashley doesn't even curl up.

The girls stop.

CARLY
Come on.

The three girls run off, past the dumpster, and out of the alley. Ashley lies on the ground, face bleeding and covered in garbage.

19 INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - DAY

19

Ashley stands in front of the sink. She turns on the water and splashes it on her face. She takes a paper towel and cleans off the food and blood as best she can.

She blankly stares at herself in the mirror.

20 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

20

A bruised Ashley sits on the swing. She smokes a cigarette. She stares up at the clouds.

The little daughter from the hospital approaches, still playing her video game. Ashley stares at her. The little daughter takes a seat in the grass in front of Ashley. She plays her game in the same fashion as she did before.

LITTLE DAUGHTER
Pow, pow, pow!

Ashley takes a drag on her cigarette.

LITTLE DAUGHTER (CONT'D)
Die motherfucker!

The girl looks up at Ashley.

LITTLE DAUGHTER (CONT'D)
I know you.

Ashley stares at her.

LITTLE DAUGHTER (CONT'D)
You were at the hospital.

She sets her game down and walks up to Ashley. She holds her hand out.

LITTLE DAUGHTER (CONT'D)
My name's Gabby.

Ashley looks at her hand. Ashley hesitantly reaches out and shakes it. The girl turns around and points to her video game.

GABBY
That's my game.

She leans in and whispers to Ashley.

GABBY (CONT'D)
My mom doesn't like me playing it.
But you wanna know a secret?

Ashley nods.

GABBY (CONT'D)
I really don't care what she
thinks.

Gabby mashes the buttons on the game. Ashley smiles.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Die motherfucker! Pow, pow, pow!

Ashley stares at the her and takes another drag of her cigarette. The little girl looks at her.

GABBY (CONT'D)
You know, you shouldn't smoke. It kills your lungs. It makes them die like a motherfucker.

Ashley looks at her cigarette.

GABBY (CONT'D)
You should put it out.

Ashley continues to smoke it.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Dead girls don't listen.

Ashley looks at her cigarette again.

The little girl returns to playing her video game.

Ashley watches her for a moment, and then:

ASHLEY
Hey.

The girl looks up.

GABBY
Yeah?

Ashley holds out the cigarette. The girl sets down her game and grabs the fiery stick. She throws it to the ground and furiously stomps it out.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Die, motherfucker! Die, motherfucker! Die!

Ashley smiles.

The girl continues to stomp the cigarette out, furiously.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Die! Die! Die!

She looks at Ashley.

GABBY
Come on!

Ashley gets up and walks over to her. She looks down at the smashed cigarette.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Come on!

Ashley raises her foot and begins to stomp on it.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Harder! Kill it!

Ashley stomps harder. The girl starts to jump up and down. She laughs. Ashley stomps faster.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Yes!

Ashley smiles.

21 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT 21

Stacey sits in front of the mirror and methodically brushes her hair. Her eyes are glossy. She's buzzed but calm. She turns and looks out the door.

STACEY
Ashley!

She continues to stare. Ashley doesn't come.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Ashley!

The door creaks open and Ashley enters.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Help me brush my hair.

Ashley stares at her. Stacey sighs.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Don't give me that look, help me.

Stacey holds out the hairbrush. Ashley looks at it and then takes it. Stacey turns her head and Ashley goes around to the back of her and begins to brush.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Gently.

Ashley brings the brush up and down, brushing slowly.

STACEY (CONT'D)
That's nice.

The brush gets tangled and Ashley pulls.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Careful.

Ashley untangles it and continues to brush.

STACEY (CONT'D)
That's good.

Ashley finishes and heads for the door.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Wait.

Ashley stops. Stacey pulls Ashley back and sits her in front of the mirror. She begins to brush her hair.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Your hair's all messy.

Stacey brushes Ashley's hair slowly.

STACEY (CONT'D)
I used to brush your hair all the time.

Stacey smiles.

STACEY (CONT'D)
There. See?

Ashley nods. Stacey sets the brush down.

STACEY (CONT'D)
You can go now.

Ashley walks out of the room. Stacey smiles at herself in the mirror.

22 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

22

Ashley sits on the bench and stares into the sky. CHICO, a boy Ashley's age, sits down on the bench beside her. Ashley doesn't pay attention to him.

Chico is shy and innocent. He talks in a monotone voice, as if he's a little kid.

Chico looks over at her. Ashley finally turns and notices him. He looks away.

Chico moves closer to Ashley. Ashley continues to stare. Chico fiddles with his fingers and then turns to her.

CHICO

Hey.

Ashley doesn't respond. He looks back at his hands, fiddles with them, and then looks back to Ashley.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Name's Chico.

Ashley looks at him for a moment, then turns away.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Ya know, like the Marx Brother.

No response.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Ya know, Groucho, Harpo, Zeppo?
Chico?

Ashley continues to stare into the sky.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Ya know Gummo? He's the fifth Marx
Brother. Left before they hit it
big.

Ashley turns to him. He smiles at her. Ashley awkwardly attempts to smile back. Unsuccessful, she looks away.

CHICO (CONT'D)

I see you on the bus a lot. I
always wanted to talk to you.
Thought you looked like you'd be
pretty cool.

They sit in silence. Chico turns his head and looks down at Ashley's hand which lies at her side. He slowly allows his hand to crawl toward her's. He stops and looks at her.

She continues to stare. Chico rubs his hand against Ashley's. She turns and looks him in the eyes. Chico places his hand on Ashley's. She takes hold of it. Chico is harmless... as if he were a 5 year old grabbing Ashley's hand.

Chico and Ashley both look back at the ground. They continue to hold hands while looking away from one another.

23 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

23

Ashley enters through the front door. She spots a large imposing man, BILL, late 40s, sitting on the couch watching TV. Stacey walks in.

STACEY
Ashley, say hello to Bill.

Bill turns and sees Ashley. He gets up.

BILL
Your mom didn't tell me her little girl had her looks.

Bill attempts to shake Ashley's hand but Ashley doesn't respond.

STACEY
Say thank you, Ashley.

Ashley stares at the towering Bill.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Say thank you, Ashley.

ASHLEY
(underneath her breath)
Thanks.

STACEY
What?

ASHLEY
Thanks.

Bill smiles. He turns to Stacey.

BILL
We gonna eat any time soon, hun?
I'm starving.

Bill grabs Stacey and gives her a kiss as he embraces her.

STACEY
Just about ready daddy-o.

As Stacey heads to the kitchen, Bill pats her butt.

Stacey grabs Ashley and tugs her along.

24 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

24

STACEY
So what do you think of him?

Ashley stares at Stacey blankly.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Please. Can we just have a normal conversation for once in our lives? Saying anything would be nice for a change.

Ashley looks for the words as she take her time to respond.

ASHLEY
I don't like him.

STACEY
Of course you don't. Don't screw this up for me again with your charming personality.
(beat)
Oh, God, I can't do *this* anymore.
(another beat; takes a deep breath)
You know what? Fucking forget it. Help me serve this dinner already.

25 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

25

Ashley, Stacey, and Bill eat around the dinner table.

STACEY
I hope everyone's in the mood for some delicious veal and asparagus made with TLC.

BILL
I love veal. You're a dream come true, Stacey.

STACEY
You're gonna make me blush, mister!

BILL
You know what veal is, Ashley?

Ashley just stares at her food.

BILL (CONT'D)
It's a baby cow.

STACEY (O.S.)
It's good, isn't it?

BILL
Yeah it is. So tender and juicy.
(beat)
Your daughter doesn't eat much!

Stacey smiles at Bill and pounds the table next to Ashley.

STACEY
(stern)
Ashley, eat.

ASHLEY
I'm not hungry.

Stacey gives Ashley a nasty look and then quickly snaps back to a smiling face... a facade for Bill.

Stacey discreetly shoves Ashley.

Ashley begins takes a few bites as she continues to stare.

BILL
You know these young girls. Always
trying to stay thin.

They all eat in silence for few moments.

BILL (CONT'D)
Stacey, really like the wallpaper.

STACEY
Oh, yeah?

BILL
Yeah, has a...a touch.

STACEY
Thanks.

BILL
You do it?

STACEY
Yeah. Well, not me personally. But
I picked it out.

BILL
Yeah?

Ashley is slowly picking at her food still not eating much.

STACEY
 (whispering to Ashley)
 We'll talk later.

Ashley doesn't register her mother's words.

26 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

26

Ashley lies on her bed with her laptop on her lap. The MOANS from Stacey and Bill making love are heard through the walls.

STACEY (O.S.)
 Oh! Oh! Oh!

BILL (O.S.)
 Yeah!...Mmmm...!

STACEY (O.S.)
 Ohhh!

BILL (O.S.)
 Yeah, baby!

Ashley just lies on her bed. The MOANS slow down.

BILL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Mmphh!

STACEY (O.S.)
 Oh...

Silence.

Ashley stares at her laptop. The screen shows a chat website she frequents. She scrolls through various screennames.

She double-clicks on the name CANDID33, types in the box, and pushes enter.

BLEEP!

HOMESTARCH99
 Hey. 18/F/Chicago.

Ashley stares at the screen. Finally:

Bleep!

CANDID33
 Hi. Chicago 2. 18 huh?

Ashley types.

HOMESTARCH99

Yeah. U?

CANDID33

A little older than that. It's in the name LOL.

HOMESTARCH99

Oh.

CANDID33

That doesn't bother U, does it?

Ashley types.

HOMESTARCH99

No.

CANDID33

Good:) Do you have a web cam? I want to see you.

HOMESTARCH99

It broke. New one coming soon!

CANDID33

:(I can't even hear your voice?

Ashley doesn't respond.

CANDID33 (CONT'D)

Maybe I could call you?

Nothing again from Ashley.

CANDID33 (CONT'D)

Too forward?

Ashley hesitates, and then finally types:

HOMESTARCH99

No, I guess it's okay.

CANDID33

Type in your number.

Ashley hovers her fingers over the keyboard, holds them there, and then types.

BLEEP!

Ashley stares at the screen.

BLEEP!

CANDID33 (CONT'D)
 Thanks. My name's Candice, btw.
 Hold on.

Ashley sets the laptop to her side and holds her cell phone in front of her. She stares at it.

The phone VIBRATES.

Ashley's eyes go wide. She suddenly seems nervous. She shoots up, grabs the phone, and puts it to her ear.

ASHLEY
 Hel...hello?

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Homestarch?

ASHLEY
 Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Hi.

ASHLEY
 H...Hi.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 You have a name?

ASHLEY
 Yeah.

Candice laughs.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Are you gonna tell me it?

ASHLEY
 Ashley.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Hello, Ashley...

ASHLEY
 (quietly)
 You're Candice?

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Yeah. Whatsa matter? You shy?

Ashley doesn't respond. Candice giggles on the other end of the line.

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's cute. I'm usually the shy
one.

ASHLEY
You are?

CANDICE (V.O.)
Yeah.

Ashley lies back on her bed and puts her head on her pillow.

ASHLEY
Oh.

CANDICE (V.O.)
You sound like a nice girl. What
are you doing talking to strangers
online? And giving them your
number! Oh, the horror!

ASHLEY
I...I don't know.

CANDICE (V.O.)
I was just kidding, Ashley.

ASHLEY
You...talk to a lot of girls?

CANDICE (V.O.)
I do. But not like this. They don't
have sweet voices.
(beat)
God, I'm such a cheese ball.

Ashley smiles.

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Crack a smile? You did, didn't
you?

ASHLEY
Maybe.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Well, you may be shy, but you have
a lot of guts. Letting a complete
stranger call you. But I'm glad
you let me. Gets lonely when you
have nothing to do all day.

ASHLEY
You... don't have a job?

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Not really. I inherited a ton of money when my parents died and I no longer have to worry about anything, money related, that is.

ASHLEY
 Cool. Sorry about your parents.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Thanks Ashley. You know what? This made my day. You're different then the others. You know what usually happens in these chat thingys? Half the time they start talking dirty, get off, and that's it. And the other half of the time, they're men. As if they can fool me.

Ashley just stays silent.

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You still there? Yeah. I can hear you breathing. I'm not boring you, am I?

ASHLEY
 No.

CANDICE
 So what do you do, Ashley?

ASHLEY
 I'm a student. High school.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 What do you do for fun? You have any hobbies, Ashley?

ASHLEY
 I like to draw.

CANDICE
 Nice! I like to think of myself as an artist. I paint.

ASHLEY
 Kickass.

Candice LAUGHS on the other end.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 You're cute. Would you mind me calling you again?
 (MORE)

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Or I can give you my number and you
 could call me? Either way, I'd
 love to talk more.

ASHLEY
 Okay.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Really? You got a pen?

ASHLEY
 Uh...the number's on my phone.

CANDICE (V.O.)
 Oh, yeah, right.

Ashley now giggles.

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Do you have to go?

ASHLEY
 No. I guess not.

CANDICE
 Cool.

Ashley closes her eyes and keeps the phone pressed up against
 her ear. The two listen to each other breathe amongst the
 silence.

27 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

27

Ashley and Stacey sit on the couch in their living room.
 GLENDA, a Social Worker in her early 50s, sits down on the
 chair across from them.

Glenda is filling out a form on her clipboard. Stacey waits,
 appearing anxious. Ashley just looks down at her feet,
 removed.

GLENDA
 (addressing Stacey)
 Okay. I'd like to start with your
 background, Ms. Collins.

Stacey looks at Glenda with questioning eyes.

STACEY
 My background?

GLENDA
 Yes.

STACEY
I think that's irrelevant.

GLEENDA
You don't want to tell me about it?

Stacey stares back at Glenda, defiant.

GLEENDA (CONT'D)
Okay. Let's try something else.
What do you do for a living,
Stacey?

STACEY
I'm a waitress.
(beat; adding)
It pays the bills.

Glenda takes notes on her clipboard. All of her questions/responses are calm and cool.

Throughout all this, Ashley remains lost in her own world.

GLEENDA
Are you currently in any
relationships?

STACEY
No, not really.

GLEENDA
Not really?

STACEY
Well, I just started seeing
someone, but it's still in the
early stages. What does this have
to do with anything?

GLEENDA
Ashley is 17, correct?

STACEY
Yes.

GLEENDA
And she's an only child?

STACEY
Yes.

Glenda takes some notes.

STACEY (CONT'D)
May I ask why do you need to know
all this?

GLEENDA
I just would like to understand all
aspects of Ashley's home life
before I can access the situation.

STACEY
"Access the situation?" What's
that mean?

Glenda sits back and takes a deep breath.

GLEENDA
If this environment isn't safe...

STACEY
I provide for my child.

GLEENDA
There's more to providing than
paying the bills.

STACEY
How about if I told you to get out
of my house?

GLEENDA
That wouldn't be the best course of
action.

Stacey stands up.

STACEY
Get out.

GLEENDA
Ms. Collins.

STACEY
NOW!

Glenda stays calm.

GLEENDA
If my report says this is an unsafe
environment for Ashley, the state
will take her from you. Do you
want that to happen?

Stacey lets this sink in. Then, after a moment, sits back
down.

GLEND A (CONT'D)
Let's talk about your background...

28 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

28

Ashley sits at her computer. She sees that Candace is online. She clicks on her name to start a conversation. After a few moments:

BLEEP!

CANDID33
Hey, you.

HOMESTARCH99
Hey.

CANDID33
Still no webcam?

HOMESTARCH99
No.

CANDID33
You wanna talk on the phone?

Ashley hesitates, then types:

HOMESTARCH99
Maybe not tonight.

CANDID33
No problem. I get that way sometimes.

After a moment of no typing:

CANDID33 (CONT'D)
Hey, Ash...

HOMESTARCH99
Yeah?

CANDID33
If I told you where I lived, would you ever considered coming to visit me one day?

Ashley just stares at the screen.

29 INT. BUS STOP - DAY

29

Ashley sits on the ground with her head leaning against the bench. Her eyes are closed and her hands are at her side. Chico takes a seat next to her. Ashley opens her eyes and looks at him, then she turns away.

Chico looks at her and smiles. He puts his hand on top of hers. Ashley just lets her hand lie under his. Chico rubs his thumb on her hand. Ashley pulls her hand away.

Chico puts his hands in his lap. He looks over at Ashley. He puts his hand on Ashley's again. She pulls it away.

Chico looks at the floor and then back at Ashley.

CHICO

Why?

No answer.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Why?

Ashley turns to him.

ASHLEY

I... I like girls.

CHICO

What?

ASHLEY

I... don't like boys.

CHICO

You like...?

Chico looks at the ground.

Ashley turns and looks off in the other direction. Chico stands and punches the top of the bench.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Shit.

Chico holds his head in his hands, crushed.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Why did you...?

Ashley doesn't respond. Chico punches the seat again, then storms off.

30 INT. SCHOOL THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

30

Ashley stares at the ceiling as she lies on the couch, across from Vincent.

VINCENT

I'd like to try an exercise today.

Ashley doesn't respond.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Ashley?

Ashley looks at him.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Would you like to try an exercise?
It's a guided meditation.

Ashley goes back to looking at the ceiling.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

I'd really like you to try this.
Would you try this for me, please?

Ashley looks up at him. She nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Alright. I'll be right over here.
You just relax, okay?

Ashley attempts to relax and get comfortable.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Are you comfortable?

Ashley doesn't respond, she just lies there.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Are you?

Ashley nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Now, close your eyes.

Ashley closes her eyes.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Now, clear your mind. Picture
yourself lying on a beach. The sun
is perfectly warm, and you can hear
waves crashing into the sand.

(MORE)

VINCENT (CONT'D)

I want you to take a deep breath
in, hold it, and then release it.

Ashley does this.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Now do that two more times, slowly.

Ashley breathes in deeply twice more.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Now you're walking into a large
building. As you enter the lobby,
a strong, armed security guard
confronts you. He looks at you and
sees who you are. He knows you. He
is there to protect you. He
smiles. He places his arm around
your shoulders and you feel secure,
safe.

Out of the blue, Ashley starts to cry. At first, Vincent
does not notice.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

You move past the security guard
and approach a large gold elevator.
The elevator...

Vincent stops. Ashley still cries.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Ashley? Are you okay?

Ashley covers her face with her hands.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Ashley? Was it
something in the meditation?

Ashley nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Which part?

ASHLEY

The man.

VINCENT

The man who put his arm around you?

Ashley nods, her sobs starting to intensify.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 You thought of your father?
 (beat)
 Who passed away...

Ashley again nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 When he was alive, he gave you a
 feeling of security?

ASHLEY
 (barely audible)
 Sometimes.

VINCENT
 Why not all the time? Why didn't
 you always feel secure?

Ashley doesn't respond. She continues to cry.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Did he hurt you?

Ashley nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 How?

ASHLEY
 (weakly)
 He...

Ashley starts to sob deeply.

Vincent realizes where this is going. He takes a deep
 breath. The school bell goes off.

Ashley instinctively gets up. Vincent stops her.

VINCENT
 Wait...

Ashley, as vulnerable as she's been, stares up at him, her
 eyes puffy and red.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Your father betrayed your trust in
 him. But you don't have to be
 ashamed, Ashley. There are good
 people out there who want to help
 you. Okay?

Ashley, very discreetly nods, and walks out.

31 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

31

Ashley stands in front of her locker and puts her books away, wiping away the remainder of her tears. Students swarm the hall behind her.

The Redheaded Girl from earlier approaches.

REDHEADED GIRL

Hey.

Ashley doesn't notice and continues to put her books away.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Hey. You okay?

Ashley turns around. She takes a deep breath.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Who are you?

Ashley stares at her.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Sorry. I see you all the time.

After a moment of no response from Ashley:

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

What's your name?

ASHLEY

(whispering)

Ash...

Another bell rings... the follow up to the bell heard in the therapist's office. Students in the halls start to enter classroom doors.

REDHEADED GIRL

What?

The bell rings again.

ASHLEY

Ash...

REDHEADED GIRL

Huh?

Ashley stops talking.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

I see you looking at me.

One of the Redheaded Girl's friends waves to her.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
It's just kinda weird.
(beat)
I gotta go.

She walks away. Ashley watches her go.

32 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

32

Ashley sits at her desk, daydreaming. A female teacher MS. PHILLIPS stands at the head of the class. She writes the words "THE CATCHER IN THE RYE" on the whiteboard.

MS. PHILLIPS
What did we get out of this one?

A STUDENT raises his hand.

STUDENT
He was really annoying.

MS. PHILLIPS
Okay. Maybe I'll give you that one. Holden reflected on how he felt everyone was phony. But what did we learn about him in the end?

She looks around the class. She spots Ashley, daydreaming.

MS. PHILLIPS (CONT'D)
Ashley?

Ashley snaps out of it.

MS. PHILLIPS (CONT'D)
Ashley, what do we learn about Holden at the end of the book?

Ashley stares at her.

MS. PHILLIPS (CONT'D)
Were you paying attention?

ASHLEY
(barely audible)
...he's phony...

MS. PHILLIPS
Could you repeat that?

ASHLEY

We learn he's the one who's phony.

The teacher nods her head.

MS. PHILLIPS

Correct.

She grins at Ashley.

MS. PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

At least someone in here read the book.

Ashley returns to daydreaming. The teacher turns back to the board.

33 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

33

Ashley exits the classroom and Steve, the jock student we saw earlier in the film, approaches her.

STEVE

Hey, yo Ashley...

Ashley stops, surprised that he is talking to her again. Steve leans into her.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You know me, right?

ASHLEY

No.

STEVE

No?

ASHLEY

Not really.

Ashley just stares at him.

STEVE

You know my name?

ASHLEY

Steve.

STEVE

Yeah, that's it.

(beat)

Hey, you want to hang out sometime?

ASHLEY
I...I don't know.

STEVE
You don't know?

ASHLEY
No.

Ashley begins to walk away.

STEVE
Well, a'ight, let me know. I guess
I'll talk to you later.

34 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

34

Ashley sits on the couch drawing in her sketch pad. Stacey and Bill enter the front door. Bill is carrying grocery bags as Stacey frantically looks through her purse.

STACEY
(frantic)
I can't find my debit card.

BILL
Relax honey. It's gotta be there.
You just used it.

STACEY
I think I left it at the store.
I've gotta go back.

BILL
You want me to go?

STACEY
No, I'll handle it.

Bill shrugs.

Stacey rushes out the front door.

Bill, left alone with Ashley, goes over and sits next to her on the couch.

BILL
You mind if I watch something?

Ashley doesn't respond.

BILL (CONT'D)
All right.

Bill reaches over and grabs the TV controller and turns the TV on.

BILL (CONT'D)
How about this?

Bill flips on a cooking show.

BILL (CONT'D)
You're mom loves this shit. How about you?

Ashley looks over at the TV.

BILL (CONT'D)
She really needs to pay more attention. That veal the other night was horrible, but you didn't hear me say that.

He laughs. Ashley lets out a smirk.

BILL (CONT'D)
Wow, that was a first I ever seen you smile. It's nice. You're pretty when you smile.

Ashley goes back to drawing in her sketch pad.

BILL (CONT'D)
Prettier, I should say.

Bill scoots even closer to her now.

BILL (CONT'D)
What are you doing over there?

He smirks and squeezes on Ashley's arm. Ashley squirms. Bill lets her go.

BILL (CONT'D)
So, how's school going?

Ashley turns and looks at the door.

BILL (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

He laughs and turns the TV off. Ashley looks down at her legs.

BILL (CONT'D)
You're mom's a great woman. You
know that?

Ashley turns away. Bill squeezes her legs.

BILL (CONT'D)
Skinny legs.

Now he squeezes her thigh.

BILL (CONT'D)
You're pretty cute.

He grabs her hand. He spots the scars on her arm.

BILL (CONT'D)
What are these?

He turns Ashley face to his.

BILL (CONT'D)
How did this happen? Huh? Your
mom know about these?

He runs his fingers along her scars.

BILL (CONT'D)
Someone give you these?

He runs his fingers along her face.

BILL (CONT'D)
You don't have to worry with me
around. I'll protect you.

He leans in and puts his lips on hers. Ashley just sits
there, numb.

At that moment, Stacey walks in the front door with a bag of
groceries.

STACEY
I found it. It was between the
cracks in the...

She spots Bill and Ashley and drops the grocery bag to the
ground. She races across the floor and yanks Ashley off the
couch.

STACEY (CONT'D)
(to Bill; enraged)
What are you doing??

BILL
Stacey...

STACEY
Get out! Get the fuck out!

Bill gets up and storms for the door. He stops and turns back toward Stacey.

BILL
Stacey...

Stacey picks up a glass bottle of beer from her groceries and throws it at Bill. It shatters near his head. Bill races out the door. Stacey turns to Ashley.

STACEY
What were you doing?

Ashley stares at her.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Huh?

Ashley doesn't respond.

STACEY (CONT'D)
What the fuck were you thinking?

Ashley continues to stare.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Answer me, goddamnit!

Ashley doesn't answer. Stacey picks up more groceries and starts to slam them on the ground.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Answer me!

Stacey walks up to Ashley and slaps her across the face.

Ashley just sits there, stoic.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Damn you! Go to your fucking room
and don't come out till I tell you
to!

Ashley gets up and exits.

Stacey falls to the ground and breaks down crying.

35 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

35

Ashley sits on her bed, desperate, anxious. She pulls out her butterfly knife and puts it to her skin. She presses down.

Blood begins to seep out. She closes her eyes, feeling the pain.

She sets the knife on the ground. She pulls out her cell phone and scrolls down to the number that reads "CANDICE".

She stares at it. She finally presses TALK. She puts it to her ear. It RINGS.

CANDICE (V.O.)

Hello?

ASHLEY

Candice?

CANDICE (V.O.)

Is this Ashley?

ASHLEY

Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)

Hi. How are you?

Ashley is silent.

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

I'm glad you called. I'm lonely.

ASHLEY

You are?

CANDICE (V.O.)

Yeah. I've thought about you.

ASHLEY

Real...really?

CANDICE (V.O.)

Not in a weird way. Just...it was fun when we talked.

ASHLEY

Yeah.

CANDICE (V.O.)

So, what are you doing?

Ashley doesn't speak.

CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ashley, can I ask you a question?

ASHLEY
Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Did you come online to meet someone
to... to just chat?

ASHLEY
Chat?

CANDICE (V.O.)
Or... have you ever?

ASHLEY
I touch myself.

Silence on the other end.

CANDICE (V.O.)
You do? Do... do you want to now?

ASHLEY
Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Are you?

Ashley puts her free hand down her pants.

ASHLEY
Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Can I touch myself too?

ASHLEY
Yes.

There's a MOAN on the other end.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Oh, I want to touch you.

ASHLEY
Me too.

Ashley caresses herself under her pants, closes her eyes, and
bites her lip.

CANDICE (V.O.)
Can we do it together?

Ashley MOANS.

Oh!
CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ashley squeezes herself under her pants as she climaxes.
Silence.

Ashley?
CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yes?
ASHLEY

Did you?
CANDICE (V.O.)

Yes.
ASHLEY

Me too.
CANDICE (V.O.)

Ashley bites her lip.

And you're still there?
CANDICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yes.
ASHLEY

Ashley?
CANDICE (V.O.)

Yes?
ASHLEY

Can I ask you something?
CANDICE (V.O.)

Sure.
ASHLEY

You don't mind that I'm older, do you?
CANDICE (V.O.)

No.
ASHLEY

(after a thought)
Do you care that I'm younger?

CANDICE (V.O.)

No.

Ashley grins.

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

Will you call me again?

ASHLEY

Yes.

CANDICE (V.O.)

You're so cool.

Ashley lays back and stares at the ceiling. She closes her eyes.

36 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

36

And we move to the next day. Ashley's eyes are still closed. She sits on a swing set. She finally opens her eyes just as she sees a car pull up, vibrating from the bass of loud music.

The door opens and the MUSIC blasts from inside. The Redheaded Girl gets out and fights drunkenly to lean on the hood of the car.

REDHEADED GIRL

Hey! You!

Ashley avoids eye contact.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Don't dis. Come over here.

Ashley just stares at the ground. The girl laughs. She walks around the car and over to Ashley.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Come on, let's take a ride.

The Redheaded Girl holds out her hand. Ashley looks down at the ground.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

Come on.

37 INT. RANDAL'S CAR - DAY

37

Ashley and the Redheaded Girl sit in the back. RANDAL, a skinny muscular teen, drives. Randal passes back a bagged bottle. The Redheaded Girl drinks from the bottle.

REDHEADED GIRL
So what's your name, girl? Didn't catch it the other day.

ASHLEY
(a quiet whisper)
Ashley.

REDHEADED GIRL
What?

ASHLEY
(louder)
Ashley.

She waves the bottle in front of Ashley.

REDHEADED GIRL
Want some, Ash?

Ashley hesitates.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
Take it.

She shoves it into Ashley's hand.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
Drink.

Ashley just holds the bottle.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
Alright, here I'll help.

The Redheaded Girl takes the bottle from Ashley and takes a big sip. She leans in and kisses her while letting the alcohol fall into Ashley's mouth.

RANDAL
Crazy bitches. I love it!

Randal reaches for the bottle, grabs it, takes a swig, then hands it back again.

REDHEADED GIRL

Of course you do, Randal. Now try it on your own from the bottle Ash, and I'll give you another little kiss.

Ashley grabs the bottle and takes a big swig from it. She swallows and coughs.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)

There you go. Smooth huh?

The Redheaded Girl leans over and gives Ashley a long wet kiss as Randal watches from the rear view mirror.

RANDAL

This is getting good. Who is this girl anyway?

REDHEADED GIRL

Shut up and keep your eyes on the road.

RANDAL

Yeah, easy for you to say.

The Redheaded Girl takes another swig from the bottle.

REDHEADED GIRL

You want me, I know it. I've seen how you look at me.

Ashley grabs her hair and kisses her hard. She moves the redheaded girls hands up her arms so that she can feel her scars.

RANDAL

I need to video this.

Randal points his phone towards the back in an attempt to video tape.

The Redheaded Girl feels her scars and Ashley moans. The Redheaded Girl stops.

REDHEADED GIRL

You really are some kind of freak.

Ashley just stares at the Redheaded Girl, confused.

The moment is lost. Randal attempts to continue to video the girls with his phone.

RANDAL

No, no, no... don't stop. Why'd you stop?

REDHEADED GIRL

Because Ashley here really is a freak who cuts herself and gets off on it. Drive her back to the park.

RANDAL

What? I thought this was just getting good.

REDHEADED GIRL

I said do it!

RANDAL

Fine! Fine. Chill, your heiness!

Randal drives back to the park as the Redheaded Girl and Ashley awkwardly sit in the back seat together.

38 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

38

Ashley gets out of the car. The door closes and the window rolls down.

REDHEADED GIRL

See you around, psycho.

The car pulls off and Ashley is once again left alone. She walks across the playground.

39 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

39

Ashley and Stacey eat dinner. Stacey is intoxicated. Ashley stares at her food. Stacey gives her a command:

STACEY

You're eating tonight!

Ashley doesn't respond.

STACEY (CONT'D)

I do not make food to be thrown in the thrash.

Ashley continues the stare at the food.

STACEY (CONT'D)

You hear me?? I do not make food to be thrown in the trash!

Stacey stands up and walks over to Ashley as she grabs a piece of food and forces it into Ashley's mouth. She moves Ashley's jaw. The food falls out of Ashley's mouth. In disgust, Stacey pushes Ashley's food off the table.

The plate SHATTERS as Ashley falls to the ground.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Fine.

Stacey sits down and goes back to eating her own food. Suddenly, she stops, then puts her head in her arms and cries.

Ashley just stares at her. We see the image of her mom go blue...

40 INT. BUS STOP - DAY

40

...and change into the sky. It's the next day, and Ashley is staring at the sky, leaning back on the bench.

Chico approaches and sits down next to her.

Ashley continues to look up at the sky.

CHICO

I'm sorry, you know.

(beat)

I don't mean to do things.

This is hard for Chico. He struggles to find the words.

CHICO (CONT'D)

My brother likes guys.

Ashley turns back to Chico.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Just like you like girls. He told my mom and dad on his birthday.

Ashley keeps watching him.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Mom and Dad kicked him out. He calls our house. Mom and Dad won't answer. No one talks about him anymore. I really miss him, gay or not, you know?

Ashley looks back at the bench.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Your mom and dad find out that you
like girls?

Ashley shakes her head "no."

CHICO (CONT'D)
Don't tell them on your birthday.

Ashley looks back at the sky. Chico looks down. They sit in
silence.

41 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON 41

The school is relatively empty.

Ashley exits a classroom. Steve is waiting by the door.

STEVE
Hey.

Ashley keeps walking.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You staying after school today too,
huh? I had detention. What're you
here for?

ASHLEY
(quietly)
Studying.

STEVE
Cool. Hey, I was thinking we
could...

Ashley turns into the girl's restroom. Steve looks around,
making sure the coast is clear, then follows her in.

42 INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - DAY 42

Ashley washes her hands at the sink. Steve approaches her.

STEVE
Hey, what's the matter?

Ashley doesn't respond.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Something wrong?

Ashley continues to wash her hands.

Steve grabs Ashley by the shoulders and turns her to face him. He stares her in the eyes. He then leans in and forcefully kisses her. Ashley's arms shake, but he holds them down.

He pins Ashley against the wall and begins to kiss her on the neck. He slides up her sleeve, feels, and kisses her scars.

Ashley tries to push him off, but he punches her in the face. Ashley falls to the floor.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Don't you fucking push me!

Ashley's nose bleeds. Steve begins to unzip his pants. Ashley stares, frozen.

Steve then grabs Ashley, his pants down, and begins to climb on top of her. He starts to pull Ashley's pants down. Ashley turns her head to the side.

CUT TO:

43 FLASHBACK -- INT. COLLINS' CAR - NIGHT 43

A younger Ashley sits in the back seat and stares at the MUSCULAR MAN who drives in front with Stacey. Stacey feels the Man's crotch as he stares over at her. Stacey continues to look straight ahead.

The man turns and stares back at Ashley. He smiles. It's creepy. Stacey turns and sees this exchange, mortified. And, then, in that instant:

CRASH!

A truck barrels into the side of the vehicle.

All goes black.

CUT TO:

44 INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - DAY 44

Steve SCREAMS. He stands up, bleeding. Ashley holds her knife at her side, now covered in blood. Steve falls against the wall.

STEVE
You cut me, you bitch!

Ashley slowly gets to her feet and pulls her pants up.

She races out of the restroom.

45 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY 45

Ashley runs to the jungle gym. She sits down on the swing.

She rolls up her sleeve and stares at her scars.

She presses her fingernails into her skin and scratches downwards. She makes vertical marks on her arm. She let's out a SCREAM.

ASHLEY

Ahhh!!

She stares up at the sky. Tears stream down from her eyes.

46 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME 46

Stacey enters the living room, dressed in the outfit of a waitress from a steak house. She takes off her small apron and places it on the table.

She runs her fingers through her hair.

She sits back onto a chair in the living room. As she relaxes, she stares across the room and catches her reflection in mirror across the way.

She gets up and walks over to it. She stares into the mirror. She adjusts her hair. She massages her face. She continues to stare.

And then, for an instant, a tired, forgotten smile appears.

DING DONG.

The doorbell rings.

The moment, and the smile, are gone. Stacey curses to herself.

STACEY

Shit.

47 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LATER 47

Stacey sits on the couch, facing Glenda. Glenda has her clipboard on her lap.

GLEENDA

...I need to validate that Ashley is living in a safe environment and doesn't require the state's intervention to protect her.

STACEY

(arms folded)

She's the one with the problems, not me.

Glenda sits back.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Ashley will be 18 in less than a year, okay? And then you can get off my back.

GLEENDA

Ms. Collins, your daughter is what's known as a "cutter." This behavior cannot arise out of nothing. It must be grounded in some past trauma. Ashley is numb. Pain is a release for her. She cuts herself, and she feels better.

Stacey digests this. It's a lot for her to face. She puts her head in her hands.

STACEY

Why me?

Glenda sighs.

GLEENDA

From what you can tell, how long has Ashley been cutting herself?

STACEY

(quietly)

Since Michael passed away. Her father.

(beat; adding)

My husband.

GLEENDA

And how was Ashley's relationship with her father?

STACEY

It was very good. He loved her. He was a...

GLEENDA

He was?

STACEY

He was a good man...

Stacey appears as if she's going to continue. But then she stops herself.

GLEENDA

And that's all?

After a long pause.

STACEY

No...

GLEENDA

Ms. Collins?

STACEY

He... he might have been...

GLEENDA

He might have been?

This is extremely hard for Stacey.

STACEY

...sexually...

Long silence. Finally:

STACEY (CONT'D)

I think he might have been sexually abusive to Ashley.

GLEENDA

You think that he was?

Stacey shakes her head "no." After a moment:

STACEY

No, I know for a fact that he was.

Stacey starts to cry. She's breaking down.

GLEENDA

And you never took action?
Confronted him? Reported him to
the authorities?

Stacey can't handle it anymore. She bursts into tears.
Between the sobs:

STACEY

No... he... he was... he provided
for us. He loved us. He protected
us. He was kind...

Stacey stifles herself. She's releasing a ton of guilt here.

STACEY (CONT'D)

...so I couldn't. I mean, I didn't
want to...

(beat)

I love my daughter. I do. I never
wanted him to...

GLENDA

So you looked the other way.

Stacey, ashamed, silently nods.

At that moment, the front door opens. Ashley walks in. She
stops as she sees Stacey and Glenda in the living room.

GLENDA (CONT'D)

Hello, Ashley.

After her moment of pause, Ashley goes to her bedroom.

48 INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

48

Ashley waits in line in front of a ticket booth.

She stares at the children's train drawings posted on the
walls.

She finally gets to the booth. The TICKET SELLER looks at
her.

ASHLEY

Downtown.

TICKET SELLER

Ten dollars.

Ashley counts out ten singles.

TICKET SELLER (CONT'D)

First trip by yourself?

Ashley avoids eye contact. Ticket Seller hands her the
ticket.

TICKET SELLER (CONT'D)

Have a good day.

Ashley takes her ticket and walks off.

49 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

49

Ashley walks down the concrete sidewalk. Her eyes are locked on a piece of paper as people walk past her.

Ashley looks up at the buildings. She continues to walk. She stops for a moment and looks around. Ashley spots a HOMELESS WOMAN on the side of the street. Ashley stares at her.

The Homeless Woman's eyes find Ashley. She looks at her. The Homeless Woman pulls out a cigarette and a burnt match. She tries to light the match up off the ground. Ashley watches her fail.

The Woman's face becomes frustrated, stressed. She's struggling.

The Homeless Woman stares at the cigarette in her hand. Ashley pulls out her red diamond lighter and looks at it. She walks over and holds it out to Homeless Woman.

Without a word, the Homeless Woman takes it and sparks up her cigarette. She holds it out to give it back to Ashley. Ashley walks away.

The Homeless Woman smiles and puts the lighter in her pocket.

50 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

50

Ashley walks up to the front door and looks at the address.

She looks down at her paper. She looks over at the list of names on the buzzer. The door opens and a person walks out.

Ashley catches the door and walks in.

51 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

51

Ashley stands in front of a door. She stares at the number.

She holds up her fist to knock. She brings it back down. She brings it back up again, then slowly knocks.

After a moment, the handle on the door turns and the door opens. A beautiful, mid thirties woman, CANDICE, stands in the doorway.

CANDICE

Ashley?

Ashley stares at her.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I can't believe it.
(speechless for a beat)
Well, come in...

Ashley just stands there.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Well?

She stands aside. Ashley enters.

52 INT. CANDICE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

52

Candice closes the door behind Ashley.

CANDICE
You thirsty, Ashley?

Ashley looks around at the small living area.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I should clean more, I know.

Ashley looks at Candice.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Am I what you expected?

Ashley stares at her.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
You're a lovely young lady, Ashley.

Ashley looks down at her own feet.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Come on, sit down.

She walks over to the couch and clears the junk off of it.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Again, sorry for the mess. Don't be
shy, sit.

Ashley walks over and takes a seat. Candice goes over to the refrigerator.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
You sure you don't want anything to
drink? I got lemonade, diet, root
beer, water if you want.

Ashley looks up at Candice.

They stare into each other's eyes. Candice makes a silly
face.

Ashley grins for a brief moment. Candice smiles.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Crack a smile?

Candice closes the refrigerator and walks over to the couch.
She takes a seat next to Ashley.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Ow!

She gets up and clears off the spot she sat on.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Sat on something.

She sits back down. Ashley looks around. She spots a framed
photograph of a girl.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Cassidy. An old friend.

Ashley turns back to Candice.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
She was sick. She passed away.
You have her smile.

Ashley nods in understanding.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
You have such a pretty face, you
know that?

She reaches out and runs her fingers alongside Ashley's
cheek. Ashley closes her eyes.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Do you like that?

Ashley nods and stares into Candice's eyes.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
You're soft.

She smiles at Ashley. Ashley smiles back.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I have an idea. Why don't I take you out? You don't have to worry about money. Sound good?

Ashley nods.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Hey? Will you let me dress you? I have some stuff in my room. You're just so beautiful.

53 INT. CANDICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

53

Candice goes through her closet and pulls out a set of pants.

CANDICE
Now, if I could just find the shirt.

She rummages through the wardrobe again. She comes out with a shirt.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Here.

She sets it on the bed.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I'll wait in the other...

Ashley takes off her shirt. She puts on the shirt Candice selected. She pulls down her pants and puts on the other pants. She buttons them up.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Perfection.

Ashley smiles.

54 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

54

Ashley and Candice sit across from one another. Their food is in front of them. Ashley looks around, clearly out of her element, but not appearing too anxious.

CANDICE
I love this place. I usually come here alone, to think. I've never brought anyone here, though.

Ashley smiles at Candice. Candice smiles back at her.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
I like your smile. You like my
smile? How 'bout this one?

Candice makes a big goofy smile. Ashley holds back a laugh.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Are you gonna laugh? Come on.
It's good for the soul.

Candice makes another silly face. Ashley GIGGLES.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
See what I'm saying?

Candice laughs too. She takes a bite of her food. She looks at Ashley, who just stares at her food.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Not hungry?

Ashley looks up at Candice.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
No worries.

Ashley looks back down at her food. She stares at it. Then, she picks it up and takes a big bite of it.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
It's wonderful food here. I love
it.

Candice takes a bite of her food. It is all over her face. Ashley laughs.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
(kidding)
What? Something on my face?

Ashley nods.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Oh? Really?

Candice intentionally wipes the wrong side of her face.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
There. That better?

Ashley laughs some more.

ASHLEY

No!

The two giggle and Candice cleans the right side of her face.

CANDICE

That better?

Ashley nods and takes a bite of her food. This time Ashley has food on her face. Candice laughs.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

What a pair we are!

Candice picks up her napkin and slowly reaches out to Ashley.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

May I?

Ashley nods. Candice reaches all the way over and gently cleans the food off her face. The two lock eyes.

CANDICE (CONT'D)

You look divine.

ASHLEY

(quietly)

You too.

55 INT. CANDICE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

55

LAURA and CLAIR, both mid 30s, stand in front of a bowl placed upon a pedestal. In the bowl is rotted meat. Laura holds up a camera and snaps photographs of the rotting, smelly meat.

Candice and Ashley enter.

CLAIR

There you are!

Clair looks at Ashley.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

Who's this?

CANDICE

My friend, Ashley.

CLAIR

Well, hello Ashley. I'm Clair.

Clair reaches out to shake Ashley's hand. Ashley hesitates for a moment, but then responds.

ASHLEY

Hi.

To Candace playfully:

CLAIR

She's cute! Where'd you meet her?

CANDICE

My little secret.

CLAIR

Robbing the cradle?

CANDICE

Shut it!

Candice sticks her tongue out at her.

CLAIR

Well, it's lovely to meet you,
Ashley.

Clair turns to Laura.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

Laura. Say hi to Candice.

Laura finishes snapping a picture. Without turning her gaze away from the meat:

LAURA

Hello.

Laura holds out her hand to Ashley, still looking away.

CANDICE

Go ahead.

Ashley takes Laura's hand. Laura finally looks at Ashley. She stops for just a moment.

LAURA

Lovely to meet you.

Laura shakes Ashley's hand, then goes right back to snapping pictures of the rotting meat.

CLAIR
Sorry about the photo shoot,
Candice. By the way, your Mom
called.

CANDICE
You know I don't have shit to say
to her.

CLAIR
We know!

CANDICE
(pointing to Clair)
What the hell is she doing?

Candice walks over and looks at the meat.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Ew.

LAURA
You're blocking my light. I'm
making a statement.

Candice moves out of the light.

CANDICE
Which is?

Candice backs off.

LAURA
I'm leaving it up to the observer
to interpret. There are simply too
many meanings.

CANDICE
Interesting.

Candice walks back by Ashley.

CLAIR
Can I get your friend anything to
drink?

CANDICE
We just came from Salvador's for
dinner.

Clair walks over to the fridge and opens the door.

LAURA
Close that, you're screwing up my
light.

CLAIR
Why don't you take a break?

Clair closes the refrigerator door.

CLAIR (CONT'D)
We have a guest. Can't you stop for
a minute?

Laura continues to click off photographs.

CLAIR (CONT'D)
Laura!

LAURA
Fine!

Laura finally sets the camera down.

CLAIR
Are you sure you don't want
anything to drink?

Ashley shakes her head, "no."

Laura walks over and begins to study Ashley's face.

LAURA
You have a lovely face.

Laura's gaze doesn't leave Ashley as she calls back to
Candice:

LAURA (CONT'D)
She has a lovely face.

CANDICE
Thanks, I know.

LAURA
(to Ashley)
Can I take your photograph?

Ashley does not respond.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Would you mind?

Ashley turns to Candice.

CANDICE
Go on, Ashley.

LAURA
Stand over here.

Laura leads Ashley over to the lighted area. She moves the bowl of meat. She redirects the lights onto Ashley's face.

She picks up her camera and stares through the lens.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Beautiful.

She snaps off a couple shots. Laura then walks up to Ashley and grabs her arm to move her into a new position.

ASHLEY
Ow!

LAURA
What did I do?

Ashley freezes.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Is there something wrong with your arm?

Ashley doesn't respond. Candice looks concerned.

LAURA (CONT'D)
May I see?

Ashley stares at her. Here we go again. We can visibly see Ashley's anxiety start to rise. She closes her eyes.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Please?

Ashley looks at Candice. Candice smiles.

CANDICE
It's okay. We don't judge here.

Ashley nods her approval to Laura. Laura rolls up Ashley's sleeve. Ashley closes her eyes again, fearful.

LAURA
Wow.
(beat)
Beautiful.

Ashley's eyes pop open. Not what she was expecting.

LAURA (CONT'D)

May I?

Ashley nods. Laura picks up her camera and frames Ashley's scars. She snaps off photos of them.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Amazing.

Laura looks up at Ashley.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Ashley rolls down her sleeve and walks back by Candice. She looks to Candice, worried, but is assured when Candice smiles at her. Ashley looks back at Clair and Laura. They both grin at her.

Ashley is stunned.

CANDICE

You okay?

ASHLEY

(meaning it, finally)
Yeah.

CANDICE

Told ya. We don't judge.

Ashley smiles.

LAURA

Hey, Ashley.

Laura rolls up her sleeve and shows Ashley her arm. It too is covered in scars. Laura smiles. Ashley smiles back.

56 INT. CANDICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

56

It's later that night. Ashley and Candice enter. Candice closes the door after Ashley. She takes a seat on the bed and pats the spot next to her. Ashley sits down. She looks down at her hands.

Candice takes one of Ashley's hands and rolls up Ashley's sleeve. She looks at Ashley's scars. Ashley and Candice make eye contact. They stare at one another.

Candice scoots her hand closer to Ashley's. Ashley looks down at Candice's hand. She takes hold of it. They look into each other's eyes.

They kiss softly on the lips. Candice's hand moves down to Ashley's leg.

The kiss grows more passionate. Candice gets up and pulls her shirt off, revealing her bra. She extends her hand to Ashley.

57 INT. CANDICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

57

The sun shines in through the window. Ashley and Candice lie in bed in each other's arms. Ashley's eyes open. Candice sits up and looks at Ashley.

CANDICE
Good morning.

Ashley smiles.

ASHLEY
Morning.

Candice turns and looks at the clock.

CANDICE
Shoot. You're probably gonna be late for your train.

Ashley frowns. Candice touches her face.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
It's okay, Ash. I don't want a one night stand. I want this to be long term. But you should still go home.

Ashley smiles. Candice leans in and kisses Ashley on the lips.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
So whatdya think? Am I gonna see you again?

ASHLEY
Yes.

Ashley gets out of bed.

CANDICE
You should wear what I gave you. Looks fantastic on you.

Ashley puts on the pants and shirt Candice gave her. She turns and looks at Candice. Candice looks at her with a big grin on her face.

Candice reaches into a night stand by her bed. She pulls out a necklace with a locket. Candice gets out of the bed.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Take this too.

Candice takes it and puts it around Ashley's neck. Candice steps back and takes a look at Ashley.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Perfection.

Ashley smiles.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Wow, you're really getting good at that smiling stuff.

Ashley giggles. They both laugh for a moment. And then, suddenly, as if a switch was flipped, Ashley starts to cry.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
Ash, baby, what's the matter...?

ASHLEY
My arms...

CANDICE
It's okay, Ashley, really.

ASHLEY
I don't want to hurt myself.

CANDICE
Oh, Ashley, honey, I know.

ASHLEY
Candice...I...

Candice steps forward and takes hold of Ashley.

CANDICE
Shh...

Ashley falls into Candice. They embrace. They stand in front of the bed in each other's arms.

58 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

58

Ashley walks down the concrete sidewalk. Different people pass her by. She stops. She spots the Homeless Woman. The Homeless Woman pulls out a cigarette and sparks it up with the red lighter.

59 INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

59

Ashley sits, waiting for the train. A TEENAGE GIRL (16) sits down beside her.

Ashley turns and looks at the girl. The girl is holding back tears.

YOUNG GIRL
His name was Tommy.

ASHLEY
Who?

The girl looks away.

YOUNG GIRL
That's what I named him.
(beat)
Do you think I would have made a
good mom?

The girl begins to cry.

ASHLEY
Yes, I do.

Ashley slowly grabs the girl's hand.

YOUNG GIRL
The doctor said it wouldn't hurt.

The girl turns away.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
He was going to be my little Tommy.

ASHLEY
I'm sorry...

YOUNG GIRL
I don't know why...

More tears start to stream from her eyes.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
I don't know why.

ASHLEY
It's gonna be okay.

Ashley puts her arm around her.

60 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

60

Ashley enters through the front door. Stacey jumps up from the couch. She's slurring her words, under the influence again, but legitimately worried.

STACEY
Ashley!

Ashley closes the door behind her.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Where the...what the...I was gonna
call the police!

Ashley doesn't respond.

STACEY (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing to me?

Ashley heads for the stairs.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Ashley, wait.

Ashley turns and looks at her.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Where were you?

Ashley stares at her.

ASHLEY
With a friend.

STACEY
A friend? Who?

ASHLEY
Candice.

STACEY
Is she nice?

ASHLEY

Yes.

STACEY

Did she give you that outfit?

ASHLEY

Yeah.

Stacey is speechless. She's holding back tears now. The emotional changes of a drunk person.

STACEY

I just... I thought something happened to you...

ASHLEY

Good night, Mom.

Ashley goes upstairs. Stacey turns around and sits down on the couch.

61 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - DAY 61

Ashley enters and sits on her bed. She lies back and puts her hands behind her head. She stares at the ceiling. She closes her eyes.

62 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY 62

Ashley opens her eyes. She is sitting on the bench alone. She looks up into the sky and smiles.

63 INT. SCHOOL THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY 63

Ashley sits on the couch and looks at Vincent.

VINCENT

Hello, Ashley.

Ashley looks him in the eyes.

ASHLEY

Hello, Vincent.

Vincent is shocked. Ashley continues to hold his gaze.

VINCENT

Well, that was a first.

Ashley shrugs.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Okay.

Ashley doesn't look away.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Um, how have things been going in class?

ASHLEY

Good.

VINCENT

Yeah?

ASHLEY

Finished "The Catcher in the Rye."

VINCENT

Did you like it?

ASHLEY

Eh...

VINCENT

That's exactly the way I felt.
Eh... like what's the big deal, you know?

Ashley nods her head.

ASHLEY

I like your hair.

Vincent's mouth falls open. He mimes having a heart attack.

VINCENT

Did you... just... say... about my
hair cut... can't... breathe...

Ashley shakes her head and smirks.

ASHLEY

Geek.

Vincent composes himself. He smiles.

VINCENT

Thank you, Ashley. Thank you for
the compliment.

Ashley smiles. Vincent smiles back.

64 INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

64

Ashley stares at her food. She pokes at it with her finger. She picks it up and takes a bite of it. She looks up and sees the Redheaded Girl approaching the table. The Redheaded Girl takes a seat next to Ashley.

REDHEADED GIRL
Hey, Ash. What up?

Ashley looks down at her food.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
As in, what you up to?

Ashley looks up at her.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
Randal and I are meeting up after class. Wanna join?

She nudges Ashley in the shoulder.

REDHEADED GIRL (CONT'D)
Said, wanna join?

Ashley looks down at her food.

ASHLEY
No.

REDHEADED GIRL
No?

ASHLEY
No, thanks anyway.

REDHEADED GIRL
Come on. Really?

ASHLEY
Not interested, okay?

REDHEADED GIRL
Huh?

ASHLEY
I just want to be left alone.

REDHEADED GIRL
Whatever.

She turns around and walks off. Ashley continues to eat.

65 INT. BUS STOP - DAY

65

Ashley sits on the bench. Chico approaches and sits down beside her. He folds his hands in his lap.

CHICO

Hey.

ASHLEY

Hey, Chico.

CHICO

How's it been going?

ASHLEY

(after a beat)

Things are good.

Chico turns to face Ashley. He's hopeful.

CHICO

Yeah, well, sometimes things get good.

They sit in silence for a moment.

ASHLEY

I saw a Marx Brothers movie once.

Chico lights up like a firecracker. It's like he's a 5 year old. He's innocent, excited.

CHICO

You did?

ASHLEY

Yeah.

CHICO

Which one?

ASHLEY

They were fighting a war.

CHICO

Duck Soup. You like it?

ASHLEY

It was funny.

CHICO

Yeah. Which part did you see? Was it the part where the bullet flew through the window?

ASHLEY
I don't remember.

CHICO
That's okay. Great movie though,
right?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

Chico smiles at Ashley. Ashley grins.

CHICO
Ashley?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

CHICO
You wanna be my friend?

ASHLEY
Sure.

CHICO
Close friend?

ASHLEY
Just friends.

CHICO
Okay, that's cool.

Chico is elated. He smiles to himself.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Really cool.

66 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

66

Ashley sits on the swing. She looks at the blades of grass. She reaches down and runs her fingers through the green grass.

VICKY (O.S.)
Hey.

Ashley looks up and sees Vicky against the blue sky.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Can I sit down?

ASHLEY

Okay.

Vicky takes a seat beside Ashley.

VICKY

I wanted to say... I wanted to say
that I'm sorry.

ASHLEY

Why?

VICKY

Because...

Vicky looks away.

ASHLEY

You don't need to be sorry.

After a moment:

VICKY

I think I could do it. I think I
could cut myself.

This stops Ashley cold.

Ashley stares at her.

ASHLEY

Don't. Don't do it. There's no
reason to.

Vicky gives her a quizzical look.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Vicky. I was wrong,
okay.

(beat)

Look, I gotta go.

Ashley rushes off.

67 EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

67

As Ashley walks, she looks up at the blue, clear sky. She
turns and studies the long row of two story houses.

A family walks by on the opposite side of the street. She
watches them walk by. A bike rider peddles past her. She
looks over and sees a man watering his lawn.

She looks back up at the sky.

68 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

68

Ashley lies asleep in her bed. The door opens and Stacey walks in. She shakes Ashley.

STACEY

Ashley!

Ashley's eyes flutter.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Ashley!

Ashley shoots up. Stacey is beyond drunk. She's practically spinning.

STACEY (CONT'D)

We need to find Michael.

Ashley stares at her.

Stacey stumbles out of the room. Ashley climbs out of bed. She walks toward the door.

69 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

69

Stacey throws the cushions off of the couch as Ashley enters. Ashley just stares at her as she pulls out the cushions and throws them around.

Stacey finally comes upon a photo album. She turns to a picture featuring the muscular man. She stares at the photo.

Ashley approaches and sits down next to her mom. Stacey is sobbing.

STACEY

I told him not to leave us...

Ashley puts her arm around her mother. They hold one another close and sit together on the wooden floor.

ASHLEY

It's okay, Mom. It's gonna be okay.

Stacey continues to sob. Ashley holds her tightly.

70 INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM/CANDACE'S APARTMENT INTERCUT - NIGHT 70

Ashley lies on her bed. She gets up walks over to the dresser. She moves the clutter around and finds the butterfly knife lying there. She picks it up and stares at it. She smiles at it and then opens the drawer and drops it in.

She finds what she is looking for. The locket that Candice gave her.

She walks back over to her bed and lies down. She picks up her phone and scrolls down to Candice's name. She pushes TALK. The phone RINGS.

CANDICE
Hello?

ASHLEY
Candice?

CANDICE
Ashley?

Ashley smiles.

CANDICE (CONT'D)
You're smiling?

ASHLEY
I am. How can you tell?

CANDICE
I just can.
(beat)
You were beautiful.

ASHLEY
Beautiful?

CANDICE
Yes. I want to see you again.

ASHLEY
I would love that.

CANDICE
Yeah?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

CANDICE
Hey, Ash... do you think I'm...

ASHLEY

What?

CANDICE

Do you think I'm, pretty?

ASHLEY

Yes. You're beautiful.

CANDICE (V.O.)

Wow. Beautiful?

ASHLEY

Beautiful.

Ashley smiles. Candice smiles. Ashley closes her eyes and rolls on her side.

71 INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 71

The bathroom door is closed. The SOUND of the shower is heard.

72 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 72

Ashley looks at herself in the mirror. Her wet hair hangs. Her arm covers her breasts. With her other hand, she feels the scars on her arms. She caresses them.

She then puts both arms over herself. There she stands. She gazes at herself in the mirror. She covers her body. She lets her arms fall, revealing her bare breasts. She stands there, nude, maintaining her dignity.

FADE OUT.

THE END