

EIGHTH GRADE

Written by

Bo Burnham

A WEBCAM'S FEED--

A young girl in front a flat backdrop.

This is KAYLA (13).

Staring directly at us.

The image quality is low.

She shines through it with an affected brightness.

KAYLA

Hey guys! It's Kayla! Back with another video. I haven't been getting tons of views on these so if you like them, please share them with your friends. I'd really appreciate it. Cool...so, um... today I want to talk to you guys about - Being Yourself. Okay, so, like, Being Yourself? What does that mean? Like, aren't I always Being Myself? Well, like, yes, for sure. But "Being Yourself" also means, like, not changing the um--
(looks down at her lap)
--uh...sorry, I'm reading these off a piece of paper-- ...OKAY "Being Yourself" also means like not changing yourself to be cool or like to try to impress a guy or whatever.

As she speaks, her eyes wander with her thoughts. She plays with her hair, twirling it around a finger, tilting her head to piece out a thin strand with both hands then fixing it.

She does this constantly.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

And it's really important to Be Yourself, because like you could be the most popular kid at school or have like the hottest boyfriend or whatever, but if you're not Being Yourself, then like what's the point? Cause, like, if you aren't Being Yourself...then what's the poi-I said that already. Okay.okay. So...okay, but what makes Being Yourself hard sometimes is that it's not always easy.

(MORE)

KAYLA (CONT'D)

Cause sometimes people will make fun of you for Being Yourself but you just have to ignore them because you are Being Yourself and that's good and if someone's being mean, that sucks but evil people exist and you can't change that. Okay...and you can't let other people tell you who you are. Like, for instance, like sometimes people say that I'm shy or quiet just because I don't talk a lot at school or whatever. But just because I'm quiet sometimes, doesn't mean...okay, like...like I'm not shy. Like if someone is nice then I will talk to them and I can be really funny and fun to talk to. But like, just cause I'm not talking all the time like everyone else doesn't mean that I'm a quiet person. It just means that I... like, I'm not scared to talk, I just choose not to.....Okay, so, like, yeah, you should Be Yourself and don't worry what other people think, and if they think you're something that you're not, just let it go and try to not care and eventually everything will work out. Cool. So hopefully some of you found this video helpful. Please remember to share this video and subscribe to my channel. Thanks for watching! Bye!!!

A WIDE VIEW reveals:

Kayla, sitting in the corner of her room, her laptop open on the desk in front of her, a bland, colored backdrop hung on the wall behind her.

She reaches forward, closes the laptop and sits in the dark.

Alone.

INT. BEDROOM. THE NEXT MORNING

The bedroom is small and brightly-colored. Posters of pop stars and movie stars and pretty photos on the wall. A twin bed with a massive pink down comforter and something tiny beneath it.

A BUBBLY ELECTRO-POP SONG fades up.

Just as the song starts to get loud, just as the song starts to reveal itself as the perfect accompaniment for a spring morning, the pink comforter on the bed stirs and a tiny hand emerges, turning off the song that's blaring from an iPhone plugged in on the bedside table.

Kayla emerges from the bed in her pajamas. She gets up and stretches, making weird morning sounds in the quiet room.

INT. KAYLA'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

BEGIN SEQUENCE

-- Post-it notes lining the border of a large bathroom mirror. Reminders and lyrics and quotes: "TRUST YOURSELF." "DON'T JUST FLY, SOAR." "BE YOUR OWN KIND OF BEAUTIFUL." "GET NEW TOOTHBRUSH." Some look freshly made, others old, their bright colors fading.

-- The bathroom is filled with steam. Kayla appears in front of the mirror freshly showered, one towel wrapped around her body, another wrapping her hair.

-- Kayla gets close to the mirror, rubs moisturizer on her face, takes the towel of her head.

-- Kayla blow dries her hair.

-- Kayla opens her LAPTOP on the bathroom counter. Opens her browser. Goes to her BOOKMARKS tab and scrolls down to a YouTube link titled: MY EVERYDAY CASUAL MAKEUP TUTORIAL.

-- Kayla applies foundation, glancing back and forth from her own reflection to her laptop's screen.

-- ON KAYLA'S LAPTOP - a beautiful, well-lit YOUNG WOMAN (16) sits in her bedroom, applying foundation in close-up. The video has seven million views.

-- Kayla applies some subtle eyeliner. Consults the mirror, the laptop, the mirror again, Blush. Lip gloss. Kayla. Her reflection. The Young Woman on the screen. All getting ready together.

-- Kayla inspects her finished hair and makeup from multiple angles.

-- Kayla grabs her laptop and pajamas off the bathroom counter and exits.

INT. BACK IN HER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

SEQUENCE CONTINUES

-- Kayla has changed back into her pajamas and is now climbing back into bed.

-- Kayla gets under the covers, careful not to mess up her hair. She puts her head on the pillow, lifts her iPhone and takes a selfie, straining to seem casual.

-- Another selfie on the bed from a different angle.

-- Another. And Another. And another.

-- Kayla sits on the edge of her bed, still in her pajamas. She looks at her phone.

-- ON KAYLA'S PHONE SCREEN: Kayla is on Instagram, posting the selfie of her "waking up." She chooses a filter. She captions the photo: "just woke up. ughhhhh" She posts it.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC. LOUD. BRIGHT.

MACRO SHOTS: a grid of a thousand pixels, forming pictures, text, moving images, then closer, to the stark reality of a Liquid Crystal Display: dozens of rectangular blocks of light, the SUBPIXELS, in repeating groups of three, red/blue/green, arranged in rows and columns, so close now that no image can form, no colors even beyond the three present, flashing and pulsing with abstract order:

Redbluegreenblueredgreenblueredbluegreenredbluegreenbluered.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. LATER

Kayla, now dressed for school, walks down the sidewalk. Her massive backpack forces her to lean forward, hands clutching the shoulder straps. She has headphones in. We follow her close, at eye-level.

The world is big. She is small and moving quickly through it.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET. LATER

Kayla walks, headphones blaring. The sun is shining. She doesn't notice. A car passes and someone inside screams at Kayla as it whizzes by.

Kayla doesn't notice.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET. LATER

Kayla keeps walking. Stops. Takes out her iPhone and looks * at it.

ON THE SCREEN: her Instagram photo has received zero likes and one comment. The comment, from asherk1313, reads: "ew."

Kayla stares at the phone and deletes her photo. She looks up and hustles across the street.

Pan to reveal, MILES GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL, a giant brick building, wide and sturdy, beyond a large parking lot.

Kayla walks toward it, getting smaller and eventually disappearing into the mass of kids and cars and buses that are all being pulled inward toward the school.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Your body is changing.

INT. HALLWAY. LATER

Kayla walks down the crowded hallway, backpack on. Rather than the sounds of the busy hallway, we hear a calm adult female voice and the cheesy educational score accompanying her.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
This change can be scary. But this change is a good thing. It means that you are becoming an adult.

Kayla walks, moving forward, head down.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
You may have noticed hair starting to grow in new places.

INT. BATHROOM. LATER

Kayla sits on the toilet in a stall.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
You may have noticed hair starting to grow in new places.

Kayla reaches for toilet paper.

INT. BATHROOM. MOMENTS LATER

THREE GIRLS (13) stand in front of the three available mirrors, preening themselves. Kayla stands behind them, her hands out awkwardly, waiting to wash them.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 You may have begun to gain some weight or grow taller....This is normal...This is healthy.

Kayla waits, hands out. The three girls don't notice her.

INT. ART CLASS. LATER.

Kayla sits at a long, dirtied table in the back of the art class, working on something with her hands:

It's some weird clay thing. Like a sculpture/face/mug, grey and soft and shiny and wet and Kayla is molding it with her hands, putting the finishing touches onto something that is turning around nothing like she hoped it would.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 Your body...is an amazing thing.

A BANGING sound. Kayla looks over to see a large BOY (13) sitting beside her, punching his clay into the table with both hands.

INT. HALLWAY. LATER

Kayla waits at the water fountain, behind a GIRL (13) who is drinking at it.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 And your body deserves respect. By understanding exactly how your body is changing, you are respecting your body and yourself.

The girl finally stops drinking, then immediately reaches into her backpack, takes out an empty water bottle and begins filling it at the fountain. Kayla waits.

INT. CLASSROOM. LATER

The room is dark and a TV has been wheeled out in front of the students. We see THE WOMAN (40s) who has been speaking on the screen - looking directly into camera. Behind the TV, MRS. NOLAN (50s) works behind her desk.

The students watch the movie with a mixture of awe, confusion and disgust. In the back, Kayla cranes her neck to see.

WOMAN ON THE TV

Over the course of these next thirty minutes, we will begin to explore and understand these changing bodies of yours.

Kayla gives up trying to see. She looks around, bored - sees something.

ACROSS THE ROOM - a STRANGE BOY has his head tucked in his shirt, the glow of his phone illuminating from inside the fabric: he's secretly watching a video.

And doing something else.

Kayla stares. Confused.

WOMAN ON THE TV (CONT'D)

Chapter One: The Hair Down There.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

TRISTAN, ARE YOU MASTURBATING???

A silence. Then the class FREAKS OUT. Laughs and screams and "ewww"s. Mrs. Nolan tries to calm them down.

MRS. NOLAN

Hey! Quiet! QUI-ET!

It's no use. It's chaos. Boys point and laugh. Girls scream and heckle in disgust. Tristan denies everything. Mrs. Nolan fails to control the situation.

And way in the back, Kayla sits quietly.

As commotion in the classroom builds and crescendos, we hear something else, an orchestra, swelling and overtaking the noise of the kids as we cut to--

INT. HALLWAY. LATER

Kayla walks down the hallway. We hear only the orchestra, straining to play correctly, bum notes everywhere, sections off tempo, instruments out of tune, the whole piece dragging and plodding along, a ton of effort, little success.

Kayla walks down the hallway. The orchestra strains to score the moment.

INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY.

The stage of the auditorium, and the source of the sound we've been hearing: a fifty-piece student orchestra is mid-performance, the MUSIC TEACHER standing in front of them, conducting.

We drift through the students, trumpet players with red faces, violinists with poor posture, clarinet players with split reeds squeaking out a high harmony.

It's a mess.

We arrive at the back, where Kayla is stationed, one giant CYMBAL in each hand, waiting for her moment.

The song ends and she smacks them together a fraction late.

CRASSSSHHHHHHH.

A pause. Then light applause.

INT. AUDITORIUM. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla sits in the audience with her classmates.

MR. MCDANIEL

Thank you again to the school band
for that wonderful performance.
Impressive stuff.

PRINCIPAL MCDANIEL (40s, gentle) is standing on stage.

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

...Alright, eighth graders! Next
week is your last week here at
Miles Grove Middle School.

Huge cheer.

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, yep, very good -- but,
BUT...we still have a lot of
important work ahead of us. And a
lot of FUN work ahead of us. We
have the High School Shadow Program
early next week...We also have a
few guest speakers. Should be fun.
And the end of the year dance.

Whoops and cheers from the crowd.

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

And, AND...we have your sixth grade Time Capsules for you to pick up today. Remember those shoeboxes that you made during the first week of sixth grade? Remember how we said that those Time Capsules were going to be a gift for the future "you" that would eventually "make it" here at Miles Grove Middle School? Well, YOU have MADE IT. So pick those up in the lobby when this assembly is over...Alright, now I'm going to turn things over to Mrs. Roach who will read the results of the eighth grade class superlatives!

Hushed excited reaction from the crowd. Whispers, "yesssss".

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Mrs. Roche?

MRS. ROCHE (50s, stone-faced) walks onto the court. She stands behind a podium and reads.

MRS. ROCHE

If your name is called, please report to the Band Practice Room after this Assembly to have your picture taken for the yearbook.

MR. MCDANIEL

But pick up your Time Capsules first!

MRS. ROCHE

Yes...okay...Class Superlatives, as voted by you - the students. Each category has a male and female winner from the student body. Okay...Most Athletic... Danny Atchison and Olivia Elder...

SOME GIRL

Woo! Yeah Oliviaaaa!

MRS. ROCHE

Most artistic...Wyatt Conville and Dawn Ringelheim...

Kayla sits in the crowd, picking at her nails.

MRS. ROCHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Class Clowns...Jed Goodwin and
 Missy Vitale...

Somewhere in the crowd, Jed makes a loud FART NOISE and the auditorium laughs. Classic Jed. Kayla continues to pick at her nails. Bites them. Bored, not nervous. We stay on her.

MRS. ROCHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Most Talkative...Pat Druschel and
 Jackie Stasiak....Most Quiet...

This gets Kayla's attention. She stops fidgeting. Closes her eyes.

MRS. ROCHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ...Andrew Fields and Kayla Day.

Kayla grimaces. Balls her hands into fists. Shrinks.

MRS. ROCHE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Best eyes...

INT. BAND PRACTICE ROOM. LATER

The eighteen superlative winners sit in the Band Room amongst the music stands and instruments.

Kayla sits by herself.

She looks over at a GROUP OF GIRLS who are inspecting and sharing at each other's Time Capsules -- bright shoeboxes full of personal trinkets. The girls laugh and do a lot of "OH my god"s and "shut UP"s.

Kayla looks down at her Time Capsule sitting on her lap --

the outside made purple and pink with construction paper. On the top of the shoebox's lid, in large glittery pink lettering, sixth-grade Kayla wrote:

TO THE COOLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD

Kayla stares at this. A door opens. Mr. M enters.

MR. MCDANIEL
 Okay superlative winners, so after
 you've taken your picture please
 return to your fifth period
 classes. Okay, we will start
 with...Mr. and Mrs. Best Eyes!
 Aiden Wilson-Carter and Kennedy
 Graves!

The group of girls cheer as one of them stands. This is KENNEDY GRAVES (13, "cool"). She walks past Kayla.

KAYLA
(weak thumbs up)
Good job.

Kennedy passes her, doesn't hear and/or care.

MR. MCDANIEL
Aiden...AIDEN!

TIME SLOWS and MUSIC BLASTS as AIDEN WILSON-CARTER (13, perfect) looks up from his phone in the back of the room. His face is blank and bored. His eyes are the best.

He gets up and walks toward the front of the room, in slow motion, annoyed and bored. Kayla turns and looks at him, her face deflating into awe - he somehow gets hotter every time she sees him.

He passes her and the music stops abruptly and we snap back into real time just in time to hear a faint, breathy:

KAYLA
Good j-....

Aiden arrives at the front of the room.

KENNEDY
Hey, Aiden.

AIDEN
Hey.

KENNEDY
(fishing)
So embarrassing that we got voted best eyes, like honestly like I don't even think my eyes are that great.

AIDEN
(almost a robot)
Yeah...

Kennedy and Aiden follow Mr. McDaniel out of the room. Kayla watches them leave and then looks down at the time capsule in her lap.

TO THE COOLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD

Kayla gently lifts the lid off of the shoebox. She begins removing and inspecting things. A movie ticket stub. A small frog figurine. A Justin Bieber magnet.

Then, a picture of a young Kayla on a field trip with her class. She's smiling in this picture. Surrounded by her classmates.

She's about to close the capsule, when she spots something. A TINY PLASTIC SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS. She picks it up with two fingers and stares at it.

The plastic Spongebob stares back as we hear a door open.

MR. MCDANIEL (O.S.)
 (whispering)
 Shhhh...hey....hey....I'm looking
 for Mr. and Mrs. Most Quiet, Andrew
 Fields and Kayla Day. Shhhh....

Kayla looks up. :-|

INT. MUSIC CLASSROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

A PHOTOGRAPHER (50s, tired) sits on a stool behind a camera and tripod. Mr. McDaniel enters the room, trailed by Kayla and ANDREW FIELDS (13, silent, very weird).

MR. MCDANIEL
 Alright guys, just pop a squat over
 there and we'll get a few glamour
 shots.

Kayla and Andrew walk over to the "photo shoot area" -- two adjacent chairs set up in front of a hung backdrop, flanked by mounted lights and reflecting umbrellas. They sit.

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)
 So we've been trying to do sort of
 funny poses that reflect the
 superlatives. Like for the Most
 Athletic, Danny pretended to be
 running for a touchdown and Olivia
 pretended to be tackling him. So,
 it should be fun, you know? You
 guys have any ideas?

No response, obviously.

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Oh! Maybe Andrew, you could be holding a book, and Kayla, maybe you could be shushing him like you're at a library or something?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Battery's dead. Gotta run to my car.

MR. MCDANIEL

Oh, okay. No problem...You know what, I think I'll run to the restroom. Hang tight kids!

The Photographer and Mr. McDaniel exit. Kayla and Andrew sit together, alone, side-by-side.

Kayla fidgets with her nails, busy. Andrew stares straight ahead, slack-jawed, teeth in braces, ostensibly brain-dead.

They are quiet from two totally different places -- self-consciousness and unconsciousness.

They sit in silence for a FULL MINUTE. Sixty excruciating seconds. No one enters.

EXT. SCHOOL. LATER

Kayla exits the school, wearing her backpack. An SUV pulls up and honks. Kennedy Graves (Miss Best Eyes) climbs into the passenger seat. DIANNE GRAVES (40s) shouts past her daughter to Kayla.

DIANNE GRAVES

Hey! Little one!

She honks. Kayla notices, walks over, hesitantly. Kennedy rolls her eyes.

DIANNE GRAVES (CONT'D)

(to Kayla)

You're Mark's girl, right?

KAYLA

Yeah.

Kennedy, stuck in the middle of this, glares at Kayla.

DIANNE GRAVES

Your dad was such a huge help with the spring fundraiser. Thank him again for me, will you?

Blue

KAYLA

I will.

DIANNE GRAVES

What's your name again?

KENNEDY

(annoyed)

Kayla.

DIANNE GRAVES

Kayla! Yes! Kayla, you know, we just opened our pool...

Kennedy turns to her, widens her eyes.

DIANNE GRAVES (CONT'D)

(to Kennedy)

Shush.

(to Kayla)

We just opened our pool and we're having our first big pool party of the summer for Kennedy's birthday tomorrow. You should come. Gonna be lots of fun, right Kennedy?

KENNEDY

Yep.

DIANNE GRAVES

You should come. It's gonna be a blast. Kennedy will send you an invite on facebook. Right Kennedy?

KENNEDY

Ohmygod.

DIANNE GRAVES

Can you make it?

Kayla looks at Kennedy, sees how unwanted she is.

KAYLA

Maybe...I probably can't. I'll try but I probably can't.

DIANNE GRAVES

Try to make it. You'll have a blast. And say thanks to your dad again for me.

KAYLA

Okay.

DIANNE GRAVES

Great! See you tomorrow maybe!

KAYLA

Okay maybe, probably not though,
thank you.

DIANNE GRAVES

Say bye, Kennedy.

KENNEDY

Bye.

KAYLA

Bye.

They drive away. Kayla stands in place, staring straight ahead, perfectly still.

Then, suddenly, she RUNS. We follow her, close, as she sprints across the parking lot, away from the school.

EXT. STREET. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla continues her sprint down the sidewalk, her backpack weighing her down, forcing her to run awkwardly in weird, forceful lunges. She breathes heavily, running as hard as she can with the weight on her back.

She sprints across the street, tiring but pushing through, down a sidewalk, then another street, passing a woman walking her dog, a couple kids walking back from school, she runs past them, her arms swinging to counteract the backpack that wants to pull her down.

She forces herself forward.

Can't anymore.

She slows and collapses onto a patch of grass, backpack first, like a flipped turtle.

She closes her eyes and catches her breath, nearly hyperventilating.

As her breath returns, she slowly rocks to her side, lifts herself to her feet, and continues in the same direction she had just been running - now just walking, head down.

INT. DINING ROOM KAYLA'S HOUSE. NIGHT

CLOSE ON on Kayla's iPad. Her tiny finger opens her iTunes app and selects a BRIGHT CHEERY POP SONG. It plays loudly.

Her tiny finger touches the screen, minimizing iTunes and opening her Instagram app.

She scrolls through the feed people she follows:

A video OF A BOY HER AGE BOWLING, captioned: "matty getting ready to suck lollllllll". A PICTURE OF THREE GIRLS HER AGE PAINTING THEIR NAILS, captioned: "friday nite nail party #GETIT". DEMI LOVATO backstage getting ready for a show.

Kayla scrolls past dozens of photos - all showing various fun, eighth-grade Friday nights being had by her classmates.

A wide view reveals Kayla's Friday night: a quiet dinner at home with DAD.

Homemade chicken breast and green beans on each of their plates. Two bowls of extras between them. Kayla scrolls through her iPhone with her headphones in, the iPad propped up on a stand in front of her plate of food.

Dad eats quietly. Kayla doesn't touch her plate, the sounds of Kayla's music now buzzing quietly in her ears.

DAD

...Kayla.

She doesn't hear him.

DAD (CONT'D)

.....Kayla.....Kay....

Dad waves his arms, flagging her down. Kayla removes one of the earbuds from her left ear.

DAD (CONT'D)

Food's getting cold.

KAYLA

I like it cold.

DAD

Okay.

She puts the earbud back in. Resumes scrolling.

DAD (CONT'D)

One more week of eighth grade, huh?

Kayla removes her earbud, annoyed.

KAYLA

What??

DAD

I said one more week of eighth grade, right??

KAYLA

Yep.

DAD

Crazy...Can't believe you're gonna be in high school. You excited?

KAYLA

Yep.

DAD

You're getting a little taste of it next week, right? The high school shadow thing?

KAYLA

Yeah.

DAD

That's fun. Do you know who you're following around yet?

KAYLA

No.

Kayla goes to put her earbud back in, Dad cuts her off:

DAD

Hey, I got an email from Mrs. Graves. Said you're going to Kennedy's birthday thing tomorrow?

KAYLA

I'm not.

DAD

Really?

KAYLA

Yeah, no.

DAD

Sounded kinda fun.

KAYLA
Kennedy doesn't like me.

DAD
That can't be true.

KAYLA
Cool.

DAD
You know sometimes kids act like they don't like you but really that's just cause they got their own stuff going on-

Dad stops as he notices that Kayla has put her headphones back in and is staring at her iPhone, not listening to him. *

DAD (CONT'D)
.....Kayla?.....Kayla.....

He crumples up a napkin and tosses it across the table, hitting Kayla in the head.

Kayla rips out her headphones.

KAYLA
ARE YOU KIDDING ME RIGHT NOW?

Dad laughs, Kayla doesn't.

DAD
Hey, come on, I'm being funny.

KAYLA
If you're the only one that thinks it's funny it's not funny it's just annoying.

DAD
(crossing his eyes)
Whaaaaaat?

KAYLA
STOPPP. It's Friday night, you said I can do whatever I want on Fridays-

DAD
I know, I know and you can, sorry. Just let me say one thing and then you can do your iPhone and I'll leave you alone, alright??

Kayla huffs, slams down her iPhone, glares at him.

KAYLA

Fine. What.

DAD

Okay...But you gotta listen. Don't be angry before I even say it or you won't really hear it, okay?

KAYLA

OHMYGOD, Dad, just say it--

DAD

Alrightalrightokay -- I'm saying it....

Dad gathers himself. Pauses.

KAYLA

DAD.

DAD

I'm THINKING.

Kayla closes her eyes. So frustrated.

DAD (CONT'D)

...I...I think you're so cool-

KAYLA

(huge huff, so embarrassed)

Dad, seriously, I'm gonna stop eating with you if--

DAD

You said I could say my one thing so let me say it...

KAYLA

....

DAD

I think you're so cool. When I was your age, I wasn't cool like you. You have all these interests and you make all your videos and stuff and that's so great and cool. But...You know but sometimes I just worry that you don't put yourself out there--

KAYLA

Please stop--

DAD

I know, look, I know the kids at school aren't great. I'm not saying you have to be best friends with Kennedy Graves, alright?...I just - and you're gonna think this is lame - but I just think you're a really special person.

Kayla buries her head in her hands.

KAYLA

(muffled through hands)
UHMUHGUEHH.

DAD

I do! Sorry, I do. You know, and I know dads are supposed to think their kid is special no matter what but I'm telling you Kayla, if I wasn't your dad, I'd still think that. Sorry. I would. And, I just--

KAYLA

This is more than one thing.

DAD

It's one chunk. I'm saying one chunk of stuff...And I know it's like "shut up, dad" and I get it, I really do, I know I'm being lame but I'm not trying make you feel bad when I say this stuff, I'm actually trying make you feel better.

KAYLA

Then let me use my iPad.

Dad sees that this isn't going anywhere.

DAD

...sure, yeah, do your thing.

Dad smiles, sad, as his daughter puts her headphones back in and stares at her iPad.

They sit in silence.

DAD (CONT'D)

Hey, Kay, remember when I used to do Monkey Chicken Man?

Kayla ignores him, doesn't look up.

Blue

DAD (CONT'D)
 (doing a funny voice,
 weird arm gestures)
 I'm a Monkey Chicken Maaaaan, I'm a
 Monkey Chicken Maaaaan. Oo oo BOCK
 BOCK ooo oo BOCK BA-COCK!

Dad laughs. Kayla stares at her iPad. Dad gives up, for now,
 goes back to eating.

They sit in silence.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER

Kayla lies on her bed, earbuds in, buzzing quietly, her
 laptop open on her chest. She is BROWSING THE INTERNET.

She stares at her computer screen, her face is in blank
 contrast to the things she's looking at: MUSIC VIDEOS,
 ARTICLES, PICTURES, EVERYTHING, EVERY PIECE OF CULTURE EVER
 RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF HER IN BRIGHT LIGHT.

Her phone buzzes.

She shuts her laptop.

On her phone's homescreen, two notifications from Twitter:
 ONE NEW FOLLOWER, ONE NEW DIRECT MESSAGE.

She opens her Twitter app. In her notifications: KENNEDY
 GRAVES JUST FOLLOWED YOU.

She goes into her direct messages. There's a fresh message
 from Kennedy: **Hi, so my mom said to invite you to my thing
 tomorrow, so this is me doing that.**

Kayla stares at the 'invitation.' She clicks on Kennedy's
 name and is brought to Kennedy's twitter profile. She has a
 cute profile picture.

Her latest tweet was a tweet to @awc123: **hey mr best eyes.
 wat u lookin at lmao.**

Kayla clicks on @awc123 and is brought to AIDEN'S PROFILE.
 His profile picture is a doucheey photo of him looking sweaty
 after a lacrosse game.

Kayla plugs in her headphones, goes to iTunes in her phone,
 selects a pop song, and blasts it, scoring the following:

She returns to Aiden's twitter page. Goes to the MEDIA section and scrolls through the photos and videos he's posted, breathing heavily. A selfie. A pic after practice.

Then something stops her. A video Aiden has posted titled: **STRAIGHT FLEXIN BRUH**. She clicks it.

It's an iPhone video Aiden took of himself. He's wearing a tank top and flexing his muscles in his bathroom mirror.

Kayla watches it. She watches him. Her heart practically vibrating.

She brings her hand up to her mouth and bites her nails.

Aiden flexes, smiles. Kayla stops biting. Keeps her hand at her mouth. As the song climaxes, Kayla turns her hand over and kisses it.

Aiden keeps flexing as Kayla begins to full-on make out with the back of her hand, eyes closed, like Aiden and her are kissing in the rain. The music follows suit.

Then, A KNOCK ON HER DOOR.

Kayla jumps, rips out her headphones, and THROWS her iPhone across the room. It makes an awful sound.

KAYLA
UHH!! WHAT???

DAD (O.S.)
I'm going to bed.

KAYLA
OKAY.

DAD
Alright, good night.

KAYLA
.....

DAD
You mad at me?

KAYLA
Just don't knock so loud.

DAD
Right. Yep. Sorry. Night.

We hear Dad leave as Kayla rolls over and off the bed. She walks across the room to her iPhone. It's screen down on the ground.

KAYLA
Pleasepleasepleaseplease.

Kayla picks up the phone and turns it over:

THE SCREEN IS CRACKED.

Behind the violent web of jagged black lines, her homescreen is a picture of Demi Lovato laughing. The time, 11:13 PM.

KAYLA
Sssssssshit. Shitshitshit.

Kayla grunts and whines, so angry she could cry. She flops back onto her bed, lies down, stares at the ceiling. Ugh.

Then, with sudden purpose, still mad, she sits up, rolls off her bed, walks across the room and unzips her backpack. She takes out her TIME CAPSULE, puts it on the floor, rips off the top, fishes through the box, grabs something, and storms back to bed.

She get under the covers and lays still. The room is dark.

She brings her hand up close to her face and we see what she grabbed out of the box:

The tiny plastic SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS. She stares. Spongebob stares back. She rips Spongebob from his Squarepants - it's a USB DRIVE.

She grabs her laptop and opens it. HARSH LIGHT. She plugs the Spongebob in to her laptop and minimizes her browser. The USB appears on the desktop as an icon "16GB FileSystem."

Kayla clicks it. The drive contains one video file.

It's titled "**DEAR 8TH GRADE KAYLA.**"

Kayla puts her headphones in. Stares at her screen.

Hesitates. Then clicks.

We hear Kayla's voice. It's younger.

YOUNG KAYLA (O.S)
Hey, Kayla! It's you, Kayla.

Young Kayla laughs. We stay on our Kayla, never seeing what's playing on the screen.

YOUNG KAYLA (V.O.)

I'm just making this video to congratulate you on finishing 8th Grade! Woohooo! I am so, so, so, so, SOOOOO proud of you.

Kayla watches, squinting, uncomfortable.

YOUNG KAYLA

I'm making this video on a FRIDAY. I just finished my first week of sixth grade and I'm about to have my first middle school weekend so that's pretty cool - you've had a bunch of middle school weekends so they're probably not cool to you anymore.

Kayla cringes at herself. Keeps watching.

YOUNG KAYLA (CONT'D)

I have so many questions for you. Are you still doing karate? I'm a yellow belt now, what belt are you? Do you have a boyfriend? Is he nice? What's the COOLEST thing you've done? What's the SECOND coolest? You don't have to answer because I can't hear you obviously but anyway, yeah, I'm really excited for middle school and, um, like, I just wanted to make this video to say great job and you're the best and I hope you had a lot of fun in middle school and I hope all your new friends are being nice to you because you deserve it. Okay. Stay cool! I can't wait to be you. Byeeeee.

The sound stops. Kayla stares.

ON THE SCREEN: we get our only glimpse at the sixth-grade Kayla, frozen in her seat, giving a smile and a wave to the camera. Her face is smaller. Rounder.

Kayla Xs out of the video. Closes her laptop. Opens her phone Aiden's video is still up behind the cracked glass. Kayla Xs out of it.

She clicks on her direct messages. The message from Kennedy.

Kayla thinks.

EXT. KENNEDY'S HOUSE. THE NEXT DAY.

Low angle on a colossal MCMANSION. Green lawn that looks fake. Stone walkway. It's all just big and gross and scary.

Dad's pickup truck is parked in front of it. Kayla sits shotgun, staring out the window away from Dad who stares at her from the driver's seat. Kayla doesn't move. A long silence.

DAD

I'm so glad you're doing this.
This'll be good. I think you're
gonna have a lot of fun.

KAYLA

Mmm.

Kayla keeps staring at the house, tense. Doesn't move.

DAD

Want me to walk you in?

KAYLA

No.

Kayla keeps staring. Dad sits patiently. Kayla takes a deep breath and exits the car, holding a backpack and a small wrapped gift.

DAD

Text me when you want to get picked
up.

KAYLA

Okay.

Kayla shuts the door and walks towards the front door. The sounds of splashing and screaming in the backyard. The sounds are strange and abstract and unsettling.

They get louder as she gets closer to the house.

Kayla arrives at the front door and rings the doorbell. She turns and sees Dad still parked on the street. She shoos him, annoyed. He waves back and drives away.

The door opens. Dianne Graves stands in the doorway, smiling a bit too wide.

DIANNE
Kayylaaaa!

KAYLA
Hi, Mrs. Graves.

DIANNE
Oh please, call me Dianne.

KAYLA
Okay.

DIANNE
Where's your father?

KAYLA
He drove away.

DIANNE
Mmm bummer. Everyone's out back by the pool. Did you bring a swimsuit?

KAYLA
Yeah, it's in my bag.

DIANNE
Great! Come on inside and we'll get you changed.

Dianne puts her hand on Kayla's back and leads her inside, closing the door behind them.

The foyer of the house is huge. Kayla looks around. It's the largest house she's ever been in.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
You can put your gift right over there on the dining room table.

Dianne turns Kayla towards the dining room and a table piled with wrapped birthday presents.

Kayla adds her small gift to the huge mass, making no difference.

DIANNE (CONT'D)
We'll open gifts after cake. Here, let's find you a bathroom to change in.

KAYLA
Okay.

Dianne leads Kayla out of the dining room and down a hallway towards the back of the house. Dianne opens one of the many closed doors in the hallway.

DIANNE

You can change in here. And then the kids are just out back through the sliding door just out there, okay, honey?

KAYLA

Okay. Thank you, Dianne.

DIANNE

No problem!

Kayla walks into the BATHROOM and closes the door. The party outside is closer and louder now. The small marble room is dark, lit only by a single bright window that flickers as unseen kids run past it outside.

Kayla is careful to remain unseen by the party as she unpacks her bag, standing close to the window's wall, out of view.

The shadows of the kids outside are projected on the wall across from her in sharp, dizzying negatives.

The party's loudness is intense and constant.

INT. KENNEDY'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla walks out of the bathroom and towards the bright glow of the sliding glass door. She approaches the glass. Stops. Stares out into the backyard.

EXT. KENNEDY'S BACKYARD. LATER

The pool party is in full peripubescent swing. In and around the pool, A DOZEN GIRLS (13-14) and another DOZEN BOYS (13-14) swim and splash and dive and yell and laugh. The boys are shirtless, the girls are in bikinis.

The boys flirt with the girls in that aggressive, antagonistic way young teens do. Splashing them to get their attention. Wrestling with them just to touch them. The girls pretend not to like it.

A FEW BOYS play an overly-intense game of pool basketball in the shallow-end, showing off to the few girls around them floating on pool noodles.

Kennedy does a perfect dive off the diving board, making a pea-sized splash upon entry. A BOY squirts a Super Soaker at a GIRL running around the perimeter of the pool.

It's a hormonal frenzy. A grape soda bacchanalia.

BY THE HOUSE, the sliding glass door opens and Kayla makes her non-entrance, wearing a green one-piece swimsuit. She steps out of the house and onto the stone walkway.

She looks at everyone. No one looks back.

She walks towards the shallow end of the pool. A boy, MASON (14, athletic) runs past her.

MASON

Z! Z! HIT ME! YO, Z, HIT ME!

Madison jumps into the pool as a BASKETBALL comes whizzing towards him, which he catches and DUNKS in the hoop before hitting the water. Kayla flinches from the splash.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Woo! Mason! Nice one!

GINA DEGROSSO (40s, sunglasses) appears beside Kayla, notices her.

GINA

Oooo honey do you have sunblock?

KAYLA

Huh? No.

GINA

You poor thing, you're gonna fry without some sunblock. Here, put your arms out.

KAYLA

I can do it.

GINA

It's a bit cold.

Gina SPRAYS sunblock onto Kayla's shoulders. Kayla winces with each cold squirt. Gina rubs it into Kayla's arms and shoulders. Kayla stands and takes it, looking like a 7 year-old.

A FEW GIRLS on the diving board notice this and laugh.

Gina stops.

GINA (CONT'D)

There you go.

KAYLA

(ugh)

Thank you.

Kayla walks toward the built-in steps in the pool's shallow end. She gets in the pool, step by step. First up to her ankles, then shins, thighs, waist, stomach and finally chest.

The water is cold, and each step makes her inhale sharply.

She waddles along on her tiptoes. The water's surface is an embarrassing and perfect measurement of height.

People splash and talk all around her without acknowledging her presence. Kayla doggy paddles over to an empty corner of the pool and dips down in the water up to her neck. She stays still.

DIANNE

Hotdogs and hamburgers in 20 minutes!

On the diving board, Kennedy is being bear-hugged and wrestled into the pool by TYLER (14, cute). Kayla watches.

KENNEDY

Tyler! Seriously! Seriously!
SERIOUSLY! TYLER!

TYLER

You're going in! Don't fight it!

KENNEDY

Uurghh noooo!

Tyler sends Kennedy and himself into the pool in a clumsy tangle. They splash and resurface, Tyler laughing, Kennedy faux-furious.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

I hate you! Oh my GOD.

Kayla watches - hating it, wanting it - her chin resting on the surface of the water. Then she sees something that makes her forget how to breathe.

Aiden. He's on the diving board. Shirtless. Once again, TIME SLOWS and MUSIC BLASTS as he runs to the end of the board, jumps and does the sexiest cannonball that Kayla has ever seen. A large splash.

Kayla watches, mouth open slightly. He resurfaces, swims over to the pool's edge and pulls himself out. He sits on the lip of the pool, looks at someone, gives them double middle fingers. Incredibly cool.

Kayla watches him, then: BWUHHHHH - a small, wiry boy emerges from the water directly beside Kayla, wearing a wet t-shirt and a large pair of clunky scuba goggles. He coughs up water and gasps. This is GABE (12) and he is out of breath.

GABE

All the way. Did it all the way.

KAYLA

What?

GABE

Swam all the way across the pool underwater.

KAYLA

Oh cool.

GABE

Could've went further if I wanted.

Gabe catches his breath. Breathing through his nose and fogging up his giant goggles.

GABE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

KAYLA

Kayla.

GABE

Cool, I'm Gabe - wanna see me do a handstand?

KAYLA

Okay.

Gabe ducks underwater. A second later, his legs shoot up from the water, splashing Kayla. They flail clumsily, fall over, and he resurfaces, coughing and catching his breath again.

GABE

Too many people in the pool. Can't do it for long if the water isn't still. How do you know Kennedy?

KAYLA

Um...we go to school together.

GABE

Cool. She's my cousin. I'm gonna try again--

He dips back down. Legs back up, splashing Kayla. He lasts a second longer, resurfaces.

GABE (CONT'D)

Water's not calm enough. How old are you?

KAYLA

Thirteen.

GABE

Cool. I'm twelve. Want to do a breath holding contest?

KAYLA

Sure.

GABE

Cool. One, two, three-

Gabe takes a giant breath and goes underwater. Kayla, a bit behind, plugs her nose, closes her eyes and does the same.

UNDERWATER -- Kayla uses her free hand to paddle and keep herself submerged.

After ten seconds, Kayla resurfaces, panting. She wipes the water off her face and looks over at Gabe. He's floating face down in the water, perfectly still, like a drowned corpse.

Just as Kayla is getting concerned, he resurfaces, panting.

GABE (CONT'D)

I won. The trick is to waste as little energy as possible. When you move, your body uses oxygen and then you won't be able to hold your breath as long.

KAYLA

That makes sense.

DIANNE

PICTURE TIME!

Dianne stands by the pool's edge with a digital camera.

KENNEDY

Mommmmm!

DIANNE

Oh hush. Girls first! GIRLS! All girls by the diving board!

The girls group by the board. Kayla watches.

GABE

(to Kayla)

She said all the girls by the diving board.

KAYLA

Right.

Kayla climbs out of the pool and walks over to the girls.

They are already posing together - hands on hips, peace signs, arms around each other. Kayla stands in the back, blocked.

DIANNE

Make sure we can see everyone.
Kayla! Kayla! Up front, honey,
can't see you.

Kayla awkwardly makes her way to the front of the group. A few girls give her weird looks.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

That's it.

The girls all pose in a tangled, wet mass - except for Kayla, who crouches awkwardly up front.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

Smile!
(takes picture)
Perfect.

KENNEDY

Can we get one of just The Squad?

DIANNE

Sure! Okay, Squad members only for this one.

Kayla AND ONLY KAYLA shuffles out of the group.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

Great! Smile!

The girls pose. They look like weird, wet ducks.

EXT. KENNEDY'S BACKYARD. LATER

Everyone is sitting around a patio table, watching Kennedy open her presents. Kayla looks on, wrapped in a towel, shivering, standing just outside the group. Kennedy opens a box.

KENNEDY

Yessssss.

It's a yellow tank top.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

Oh my god, so cute.

STEPH

I know you have ones like it.

KENNEDY

Not in this color.

STEPH

That's what I was thinking.

Kayla sneaks a look at Aiden, who is sitting in a chair, bored, towel hanging around his neck. He looks over at Kayla and she immediately looks away. Dianne brings over a small square box.

DIANNE

This one is from Kayyyyla.

Kennedy looks up and gives Kayla a half-smile. Kayla gives her a full smile and a little wave. Kennedy opens the box, revealing a small, card-based board game.

KENNEDY

...what is it?.

KAYLA

It's a game, it's really fun. You, you um, you take turns - like everyone gets ten cards and then you take turns doing - you'll see. It's like Go Fish but funner...

KENNEDY

...Cool.

The other girls contain their laughter.

Kennedy puts the box aside. Kayla shrinks.

DIANNE
Okay, next is Julia--

MAN (O.S.)
(singing)
HA-PPY BIRTH-DAY...

DIANNE
MIKE, NO, MIKE-

KENNEDY
DADDD! NO, IT'S NOT TIME YET.

MR. GRAVES (40s) enters frame carrying a very expensive cake.

MR. GRAVES
OKAY, Jesus Christ, I'll wait.

KENNEDY
OH MY GOD.

DIANNE
Oh Mike, Mike, Mike. *

MR. GRAVES
I PICKED THIS THING UP AT 8 IN THE
GODDAMN MORNING-

INT. KENNEDY'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LATER.

Drift through the LIVING ROOM, where the girls and boys are taking turns playing a KARAOKE VIDEO GAME. Continue past them, down a hallway and into the LIVING ROOM, where Kayla is sitting alone on a chair by the window, talking on the phone, quietly.

KAYLA
(whispering)
Yes...yes, please just come. The party's over, it ended early....I don't KNOW it just did, can you please come pick me up please?

KAYLA (CONT'D)
...DAD...ohmygod everyone's leaving, I'm like the last person here...I'm not whispering, it's just bad service here who cares please just come...that's too long. Why can't you come quicker?...UGHH. Okay whatever, fine, just come please. And don't come inside just text me when you're close...thanks. Okay...THANKS I said, I said thanks...okay...love you too bye.

Kayla hangs up. Huffs. Looks down at her phone.

ON HER PHONE'S SCREEN: still violently cracked, Kayla opens twitter and begins scrolling through her feed. Scrolls down, down, down - OUCH!

Kayla winces, looks at her thumb. A tiny drop of blood. She cut herself on the cracked glass of her phone. Kayla puts the tiny cut to her mouth.

Then:

AIDEN (O.S.)

Oh sorry.

Kayla turns, freezes. It's Him.

KAYLA

...No.

AIDEN

I just gotta...

Aiden walks towards her, purposefully, sipping soda from a cup with a crazy straw stuck in it. He stops directly beside her and bends down on one knee.

KAYLA

Wh-....

He reaches under her chair.

AIDEN

Was just grabbing my phone. Had to charge it.

KAYLA

(forced)

Oh, hahahah. Yeah. My phone, um...my phone runs out of batteries sometimes too.

AIDEN

Cool.

Aiden is pretty dull. Kayla doesn't notice/care. He gets up.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Everyone's in there, you know.

KAYLA

Are they? Oh yeah, yeah, I was just um...yeah, I'm going in there in a second.

AIDEN

Okay.

Aiden leaves. Kayla catches her breath. She notices something on the floor where Aiden knelt down -- HIS SODA AND CRAZY STRAW. Kayla makes sure no one is watching, and then quickly grabs the straw and sticks it in her back pocket.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Hey guys! It's Kayla! Back with another video. Today I want to talk about - Putting Yourself Out There.

She gets up and walks toward the family room.

INT. KENNEDY HOUSE. FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The kids are piled on couches and chairs, watching Z (13, a big boy) who is standing and singing into a cheap microphone in front of a giant flat-screen TV displaying a Karaoke Video Game. Z is hamming it up. The others watch, laugh.

The scene looks raucous and loud, but we hear none of it.

Instead, we hear Kayla's speech to her webcam and the quiet of the bedroom in which it is being delivered.

Kayla enters the family room. Stops in the doorway.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Okay, so, like, "Putting Yourself Out There". What does that mean? Like, Putting Yourself Out There? Where's There? Okay, these are all good questions but they're also bad questions.

Kayla inches towards the couch, stands behind it, forces a smile.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Cause it's really about Putting Yourself Out Anywhere. It doesn't matter, like, where you do it, you just have to do it. Just Put Yourself Out There. Just go for it.

Kayla tries leaning on the couch. Tries a few different positions.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Now Putting Yourself Out There can be really scary.

(MORE)

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

So if you're scared to Put Yourself
Out There, like, don't worry cause
that's normal and lots of people
feel that way.

Z hits his final note, arms out like a diva. The kids laugh and applaud. Kayla does too. Z turns and holds out the microphone, saying "Who's next? Who wants it?"

KAYLA (V.O.)

I used to be scared but then I Put
Myself Out There and now I do it
all the time.

Kayla looks around, then at Z. She clenches her jaw, then raises her hand. Z notices and waves her over. Kayla slowly walks towards him.

KAYLA (V.O.)

And the first time you Put Yourself
Out There is always the hardest.

Kayla takes the microphone from Z. She stands in the middle of the large, crowded semi-circle of kids in the family room.

She has zero stage presence.

KAYLA (V.O.)

But once you do it, you'll be
really glad that you did. I
promise.

Kayla looks up at the TV. The song starts. She begins to sing quietly. Not moving. Stealing glances at the kids around her.

They watch, bored.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So, like, next time you get the
chance to like play a game or sit
at a new lunch table, or like, I
don't know, go skydiving or
something, you should do it.

Kayla starts to sway back and forth as she sings, picking up steam.

KAYLA (V.O.)

But once you Put Yourself Out
There, things aren't gonna change
right away.

Kayla starts getting more into it. A few hand gestures.

Nothing major. She closes her eyes.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Think of Putting Yourself Out There
like a little snowball or
something. Like you put the little
snowball up on a hill, you Put It
Out There, and then it'll roll down
the hill and get bigger and bigger
and bigger.

Kayla sings and looks around, kids are nodding and starting to smile politely. In the corner, Gabe watches, smiling huge.

Kayla finally sees his face without those big goggles on. He is cute like her. He gives her a very real and enthusiastic double thumbs up.

KAYLA (V.O.)

The first time I Put Myself Out
There, like, nothing really changed
at first. But then I just kept
doing it and doing it and doing it.

Kayla keeps singing, looks at Aiden, who is texting on the couch.

KAYLA (V.O.)

And now I have tons of friends who
really like me and I Put Myself Out
There all the time.

Kayla closes her eyes and hits her big final note.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So be brave. Put Yourself Out
There. It's the best.

The song ends. She looks around. Light, unenthusiastic applause from her peers. Nothing major. But for Kayla, it's a huge win. She looks around and smiles, still holding the microphone.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. THAT NIGHT.

Kayla is at her desk, speaking to her webcam in the same clothes that she was just singing in.

KAYLA

As always, if you liked this video,
please share it with your friends
and subscribe to my channel. Thanks
for watching! Bye!!!

She hits spacebar on the computer and exhales - happy.

She minimizes her webcam's application and opens her internet browser - it is displaying her YOUTUBE CHANNEL HOMEPAGE. The heading reads: Kayla's Korner: Advice for people like me.

Thumbnails from a dozen of her 156 videos. Titles include: "KAYLA'S KORNER: Being Yourself", "KAYLA'S KORNER: Flirting", "KAYLA'S KORNER: Dealing With Parents", "KAYLA'S KORNER: Cool Vs. Weird". Every video has less than 20 views.

Kayla clicks the UPLOAD button in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

She smiles.

MUSIC STARTS.

BEGIN SEQUENCE:

INT. KAYLA'S BATHROOM.

Kayla paces back and forth, stealing looks at herself in the mirror.

Her face twisted into what many recognize as "I just smelled something awful" but what Kayla recognizes as "I am cool and I am confident and I don't care."

She has fake conversations with unseen people.

KAYLA
(quiet, almost mumbled)
What? Oh hey....what's your name
again? -- cool.... yeah I'd be up
for that.... Oh heyyyy...yeah.
TOTALLY. HAAAAHA!

EXT. KAYLA'S BACKYARD. AROUND THE SAME TIME

Kayla takes selfies in different locations. Smiling against a tree. Laying in the grass.

BUILDING IN INTENSITY AS WE CUT BETWEEN:

- Talks in the bathroom, continuing to practice future conversations:

KAYLA

Who told you that?...someone said that? Whoayeah, totally hahaha...it was great....it. was. GREAT.... it was SO MUCH FUN....it was THE BEST.....

- More selfies outside.

- Kayla in the bathroom. She leans against the counter, changing gears, making flirty eyes. She stares at someone who is not there.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

(so flirty)

nope.....noooo.....thanks.....
...what?.....sure.....

Blue

She reaches into her back pocket. Takes out Aiden's crazy straw.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

...I can't believe this.....wow....

She brings the straw up to her face.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

.....I love you too.....

Kayla closes her eyes, and pops the straw in her mouth.

- Back in her bedroom, in the clothes she was taking selfies, in. She's on her phone. She opens her Twitter profile page. Clicks on her profile picture: a photo of her with her face, barely visible.

She clicks on a small icon on the photo's lower left hand corner: CHANGE PROFILE PICTURE. She selects RECENT IPHONE PHOTO UPLOADS from the menu. Chooses one the pictures she just took - her in her backyard, smiling and looking directly into camera.

She clicks UPLOAD and is brought back to her profile, complete her new picture.

She stares at the screen. Smiles.

END OF SEQUENCE.

INT. CAFETERIA. LATER

Kayla sits by herself in the crowded cafeteria, her brown bagged lunch beside her. She is writing in a large school notebook, hunched over it, her face six inches from the paper.

She has bisected the paper with a vertical line. On the top of the left side: THINGS I WANT. On the top of the right: HOW TO GET THEM. The list has been filled out on both sides - with five or six bullets of "how"s for each corresponding "thing."

On the left: more confidence. To the right of that: don't slouch. smile more. speak louder.

On the left: more friends. On the right: make small talk. be nice. more nice comments on peoples fb/instagram. dress cooler.

On the left: a BEST friend. On the right: get more friends first. pick favorite one. be there for her NO MATTER WHAT.

On the left: boyfriend (Aiden?). On the right, Kayla fills in the solutions: flirt. be sexy. new clothes. haircut?? play it cool.

The sound of girls giggling and Kayla looks up, sees someone and quickly grabs a binder out of her backpack. Tucked in the inside pocket of the binder, is a neatly folded piece of paper with "KENNEDY" written on the outside.

Kayla snatches the letter and gets up from her table and approaches the giggling Kennedy and her friend Steph.

KAYLA
Kennedy, hey.

They turn.

KENNEDY
Hey...?

KAYLA
Hi, thanks for letting me come to your pool party.

KENNEDY
No problem.

KAYLA
I wrote you a little letter thing just thanking you for inviting me.

She hands it to Kennedy, who takes it, weirded out.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

I had a ton of fun. Your house is really cool.

KENNEDY

Thanks...

KAYLA

Hey Steph.

STEPH

What?

KAYLA

...if...if ever need another person to swim with...or like if you um...if you--

KENNEDY

Yeah, sure. Sounds good.

KAYLA

Great! Great seeing you guys! Have a great day!

KENNEDY

Cool.

They turn and leave. Kayla walks back to her table, smiling.

Then, we hear THREE LOUD GUNSHOTS.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY. MORNING.

A large man, a SHOOTER, wearing a Kevlar vest and a Balaklava, gas cannisters attached to a military belt, holding a large black automatic rifle, strolls down an empty hallway. Firing shots ahead of him.

The shots crack and echo. GACK! GACK! GACK!

He steps over a downed BODY (13) and continues down the hallway. GACK! GACK!

A BRAVE BOY (12) comes charging out of the boy's bathroom towards the shooter.

BRAVE BOY

Oh my god! A school shooter!

The shooter easily picks him off - GACK! GACK! GACK! He flops dramatically to the ground, "dead".

At the end of the hallway, dozens of eighth-grade students lean against the lockers, creating a gauntlet for the shooter to walk through. The students watch him, some bored, some riveted. They are not scared.

The Shooter removes his Balaklava, he is OFFICER TODD (50s). He speaks to the students.

OFFICER TODD

OKAY! Let's give a big hand to our volunteers from the drama club.

The students lightly applaud as the dead bodies, spattered with fake blood, get up and dust themselves off and bow.

Kayla is leaned against a locker amongst her peers, watching Officer Todd.

OFFICER TODD (CONT'D)

Now kids, we've went over what you should do if you hear gunshots in the distance. And what are we supposed to do in that situation?

STUDENTS

(unison)

Run in the opposite direction.

Kayla mouths along, as her attention shifts from Officer Todd to someone else:

It's Aiden, across the hallway, looking impossibly bored, banging the back of his head slowly against the locker behind him. Kayla watches him. A girl beside her, DYLAN (13), bullet wound in the center of her forehead, notices.

DYLAN

You staring at Aiden?

KAYLA

(embarrassed)

What?

DYLAN

He's a dick. He dumped Chelsea because she wouldn't send him naked pictures.

KAYLA

Wh-...really? That's weird.

As Officer Todd continues to speak, we switch between Aiden, being a bored brat, and Kayla, watching him, straining to figure out her mysterious, sexy classmate.

OFFICER TODD (O.S.)

Good. But now we're gonna learn about what should be done when the gunshots are close. When the shooter is just down the hallway or just outside your classroom. What you just saw was an example of what NOT to do. If the shots are loud and close and you are in a classroom or bathroom, you are to STAY PUT. TURN OFF THE LIGHTS. FIND COVER. STAY CALM. AND, IF POSSIBLE, BARRICADE THE ENTRANCE.

Aiden has begun trying to blow spit bubbles. Kayla stares at him, biting her nails.

OFFICER TODD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If you are within range of the shooter, if you are in the same hallway as the shooter, YOU ARE TO RUN AWAY AS FAST AS YOU CAN. If you are being shot at or feel as if you could be being shot at, you should run away in a ZIG-ZAG PATTERN. This will make you a harder target to hit. Attacking or rushing the shooter WILL NOT WORK. Negotiating or pleading with the shooter WILL NOT WORK. If someone has entered your school with a gun, you are to assume that he or she CANNOT BE REASONED WITH. If others have been wounded, lying down and staying perfectly still can work. This will protect your vital organs and the shooter may mistake you for one of the dead. BUT IF YOU CAN RUN, RUN. DO NOT BE A HERO. SAVE YOURSELF. BE YOUR OWN HERO AND SAVE YOURSELF.

Kayla stares at Aiden.

INT. CLASSROOM. LATER

The students sit at their desks. MR. DANKERT (30s, quiet) stands at the front of the classroom. They are all waiting for something. An announcement on the intercom:

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE (INTERCOM)
 COACH RED to the main office. COACH
 RED to the main office, please.

MR. DANKERT
 Alright, guys, that's the signal.

He turns off the lights. All the students take cover under their desks.

MR. DANKERT (CONT'D)
 Okay, everyone please be respectful
 of the drill and stay quiet. Should
 only be a few minutes.

Mr. Dankert climbs under his desk. In the back, Kayla is crouched under hers. Across the room, she sees Aiden, under his desk, playing a game on his phone. She makes a decision and slowly crawls towards him.

She passes other students who give her weird looks as she crawls on all fours across the classroom. She arrives at Aiden. She whispers.

KAYLA
 Hey.

He looks over at her, doesn't care, goes back to his phone.

AIDEN
 Hey.

KAYLA
 Whatcha doing?

AIDEN
 Playing a game.

KAYLA
 Cool.....you excited for high
 school next year?

AIDEN
 Yeah. Should be cool.

KAYLA
 Yeah, totally, I was thinking the
 same thing. I think it'll be cool,
 too.

A silence.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
(making small talk)
You think there'd ever be an actual
shooting here?

AIDEN
I wish.

KAYLA
Yeah, me too.....Why do you wish
there was one?

AIDEN
Cause I'd fuck him up. Take his gun
and elbow him right in the jaw, lay
him out. I wouldn't be sitting
under my desk like a pussy that's
for sure.

KAYLA
Yeah, you would fuck him up.
Totally. He'd be screwed.

AIDEN
Yep.

After a long silence, Kayla takes out her phone. Starts
scrolling through it. She keeps looking up at Aiden as she
does it, seeing if he's looking over at her. He's not.

She pretends to see something on her phone that surprises her
and she holds the phone to her chest, hiding the screen.

KAYLA
Whoa...oh man, that was close. That
was almost really embarrassing.

She waits for Aiden to ask her about what just happened, he
doesn't.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
Oh my god that was so funny. Aiden,
guess what just happened?

AIDEN
(doesn't care)
What?

KAYLA
Oh my god it's so embarrassing, I
can't even say it.

AIDEN
Okay.

KAYLA

...I opened my phone to look at Instagram and I accidentally opened my photo section, and thank god no one was looking over my shoulder, because a dirty photo I took the other night came up.

Aiden looks up, immediately interested. This first taste of Aiden's undivided attention nearly paralyzes Kayla.

AIDEN

...really?

KAYLA

(words barely forming)
...yeah...so embarrassing...

AIDEN

What was the photo of?

KAYLA

Just.....me.

Aiden looks her up and down.

AIDEN

Doing what?

KAYLA

Just.....hangin' out.

AIDEN

...Can I see it?

KAYLA

No, cause...those pictures are for my boyfriend only.

AIDEN

Who's your boyfriend?

KAYLA

...um...I don't...I don't have one right now. But I take lots of dirty pictures so that I'll have plenty to send my boyfriend once I have one.

AIDEN

Really?

KAYLA

Yeah...

AIDEN
 ...do you give blowjobs?

KAYLA
 ...um-

The lights turn on.

MR. DANKERT
 Okay, everyone back up.

Kayla looks up, panicked that she's not at her seat.

KAYLA
 (to Aiden)
 Okay, nice talking to you.

AIDEN
 Yeah.

KAYLA
 To answer your question, though,
 yes I do. I do give them and I'm
 really good at it.

Aiden watches Kayla scoot away, intrigued, maybe even interested.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. DAY

Kayla sits on her bed, cross-legged. Her laptop in front of her. She has a small, plastic bag of Cheez-Its.

ON THE SCREEN - Google's homepage. Kayla types in the search bar: "how to give a blowjob". She pauses. Adds a word: "how to give a great blowjob." She hits enter and is brought to the results page.

A list of helpful articles: "BLOW LIKE A PRO: 5 WAYS TO SUCK IT LIKE A PORNSTAR." "eHOW: THE INS AND OUTS OF THE BLOWJOB." "THE ART OF HEAD: LEARN HOW TO PLEASE HIM."

Kayla scans. Rather than clicking on one of the links, she clicks on the Google's VIDEO tab and is brought to the video results page.

The first link is to a video entitled, "BLOWJOB TIPS FROM PROFESSIONAL BJ ARTIST LEXXI MAZE." Kayla clicks on the link and is brought to the porn site.

A large triangular play button is superimposed over a screenshot of LEXXI MAZE ("18").

Kayla clicks the play button and the video starts. Lexxi sits on a well-lit couch and speaks to camera.

LEXXI MAZE

Heyyy guys, I'm Lexxi Maze and I'm here to teach you guys how to give a really good blowjob. Okay...so first thing you're gonna want to do is get it wet--

Kayla winces, turns down the volume on her laptop. Lexxi's voice is heard, quieter now.

LEXXI MAZE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

A dry blowjob is a bad blow job. So make sure you're well hydrated before you start.

Even the low volume is too much. Kayla reaches over to her desk, grabs her earbuds, and plugs them into the computer.

Lexxi's voice stops. Now we hear just a vague buzzing from the earbuds as Kayla puts them in her ears and listens.

Kayla watches the screen intently as Lexxi says and does God knows what. We don't see the screen or hear Lexxi. We just watch Kayla as she nibbles on Cheez-Its and tries to take everything in.

Kayla winces. Squints.

She stops eating her Cheez-Its. Can't even chew them.

Kayla clenches her jaw. Covers part of the screen with her hand. Looks away, looks back. This is way too much.

Kayla shuts her laptop.

Takes her earbuds out.

Stares straight ahead.

The room is quiet.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla stands at the refrigerator. She opens the freezer, looks around, moves a few things. Nothing. She tries the fridge. Opens a few drawers. Nothing.

She slowly turns toward the kitchen counter. There, in a large wooden bowl, atop half a dozen red delicious apples, is A BUNCH OF BANANAS.

Kayla walks toward them like a nervous bride. She picks up the entire bunch. Looks at it. Looks at each of the five bananas. Picks one, yanks it from the bunch, and returns the rest to the bowl.

Kayla leans against the counter. She grips the banana and holds it a foot away from her face, pointing it at her mouth like a microphone (stem down).

She stares at it. She stares hard. It is yellow and brown and weird-looking. She closes her eyes and just as she opens her mouth:

The front door opens and Dad enters - wearing work boots and jeans spattered with white paint. Kayla jumps and lowers the banana (still holds it). Acts casual.

DAD

Hey. Sorry, didn't mean to scare ya.

KAYLA

You didn't.

DAD

Whatcha up to?

KAYLA

Nothing.

DAD

Cool. School was good?

KAYLA

Yeah.

DAD

Good. I ran into uh.....is that a banana?

KAYLA

(too quick)
What?

DAD

You having a banana?

KAYLA

Oh, yeah, I was just grabbing a banana.

DAD

I thought you hated bananas.

KAYLA

...No.

DAD

Cause I swear like a month ago I asked you if you wanted a banana and then you got all mad because you said that you hate bananas and I always forget that you hate bananas. I actually think I wrote a note for it on my app thing so I wouldn't forget.

Dad takes out his iPhone and plays with it.

DAD (CONT'D)

...it's...it should be like...yeah, here, look--

He holds up his phone, showing the note he wrote.

DAD (CONT'D)

"Kayla hates bananas." I wrote it down.

KAYLA

Well I don't hate them anymore.

DAD

That's great. Yeah, you always gotta check to see if you still hate stuff.

KAYLA

Mhmm...

A silence with only one solution. Kayla grabs a hold of the stem and peels the banana. Dad watches her, smiling. Kayla does her best not to react to that smell she hates so much.

Kayla slowly brings the peeled banana to her mouth. She closes her eyes and opens her mouth. The banana goes in. She bites, chews, tries not to gag, tears welling in her eyes.

DAD

You sure you like them?

Kayla closes her eyes. Tries to swallow. Can't.

DAD (CONT'D)

You really don't seem to be enjoying that.

More chewing. Tries to swallow again. Gags.

DAD (CONT'D)
Honey, you don't look like--

Kayla SPITS out the banana.

KAYLA
FINE! I DON'T LIKE BANANAS. HAPPY?!

She throws the banana at her father. It hits him in the chest. He is too confused to flinch. Kayla storms out of the kitchen and into her room, slamming the door shut.

DAD
(to himself)
...no clue...

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Kayla lies on her bed, her laptop open on her chest. She types into Google: things that are shaped like bananas.

Her phone buzzes.

A notification: one new instagram message.

It's Gabe.

He's written: **hey kayla!**

She responds: **hey!**

Gabe: **thanks for exepcting my friend request.**

Kayla: **no prob!**

Gabe: **it's gab from kennedy's pool party.**

Gabe: **GABE I mean.**

Kayla: **yea i know. how r u?**

Gabe: **i'm good. u?**

Kayla: **me too.**

Gabe: **cool.**

When Gabe types, Kayla can see via a message in the chatbox saying, "GABE IS TYPING..." He types. Stops. Types again.

Stops. His next thought is going through a few drafts.

A KNOCK on the door. Kayla closes her laptop.

KAYLA

Yeah?

The door opens. Dad pokes his head in.

DAD

Hey.

KAYLA

Hi.

DAD

How ya doin'?

KAYLA

Good.

DAD

Good...me too...

KAYLA

....

DAD

So you got the high school thing tomorrow right? The shadow thing?

KAYLA

Yeah.

DAD

That's cool. That'll be fun.

KAYLA

Yeah.

DAD

Cool...can't wait to hear about it.

KAYLA

Yeah.

DAD

...Alright, well good night, I love you, don't stay up too late.

KAYLA

Just so you know, you don't have to...I'm not mad, I'm just saying you don't have to worry about me anymore cause I'm actually doing really good and my life is really amazing.

DAD
...that's awesome. That's great.

KAYLA
Yeah...okay, goodnight.

DAD
Night. Love you.

KAYLA
Love you too.

Dad closes the door.

Kayla sits in the dark. Doesn't move. After a long silence, she closes her eyes and whispers into the dead air:

KAYLA (CONT'D)
Dear God. Tomorrow is a really important day for me and it would really mean a lot if you could make it a good day. I know everyday can't be a good day but if tomorrow could be a good one I would really appreciate it. Even if, like, I have to have a bunch of bad days sometime in the future, I'll take that if it means that tomorrow can be a really, really good day. That's all. Thank you. Love, Kayla.

Kayla sits in the dark. Then opens her laptop again. The light is sudden and intense. She doesn't react.

EXT/INT. BUS. MILES GROVE HIGH MORNING

A bus-load of eighth graders parked outside MILES GROVE HIGH.

The kids talk and laugh and goof around. Kayla sits against one of the windows toward the back of the bus. She is attentive, quiet, nervous, ready for something.

Mr. McDaniel stands at the front of the bus, no one pays attention to him - except for Kayla, who sits up straight and listens very carefully.

MR. MCDANIEL
Settle down! Settle! Okay, you are all here as part of the High School Shadow Program...we're going to all walk in as a group, then you will be individually paired with one of the students from Miles Grove High.
(MORE)

MR. MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

You will stay with that one person for the entire school day. You are not, I repeat, NOT to leave their side. These students volunteered and are here to help you and guide you through a day of high school. Some of you will be paired with freshmen, others will be paired with sophomores or juniors. So please be respectful and take it all in. This should be a learning experience.

In the back, Kayla is listening, nodding.

MR. MCDANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

This is your chance to get a glimpse of what life will be like for you next year. So pay attention.

Kayla listens to this intensely, psyching herself up.

MR. MCDANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And have fun.

INT. MILES GROVE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY. LATER

The hallway is crowded with high school kids. They are bigger. Older. They talk and move and load things in and out of lockers. Then, from within the chaos, a LINE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLERS, moving slowly down the middle of the hallway, bisecting the crowd.

The middle schoolers move in single file - and each middle schooler has his or her right arm attached to the right shoulder of the person in front of him or her. They march, like prisoners through the gauntlet of the older kids.

And somewhere in the line is Kayla, her eyes scanning everything around her.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL- STUDY ROOM. LATER

Kayla sits as various high school students pair off with Kayla's classmates. She scans the crowd for her potential Shadow. A BIG WEIRD KID (16) walks towards Kayla, Kayla sees him, freezes, horrified.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Kayla?

Kayla turns to see OLIVIA (16). Kayla is immediately nervous to impress her.

KAYLA
Hey.

OLIVIA
I'm Olivia.

KAYLA
(so excited)
Hey.

OLIVIA
(laughs)
Ohmygod you're so cute.

KAYLA
Hahaha th--...thanks!

OLIVIA
Ready?

KAYLA
Yeah, yeah, definitely.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla walks as close to Olivia as possible.

OLIVIA
So, you excited to be a freshman?

KAYLA
Totally, yeah.

SOME BOY (17) passes.

SOME BOY
Yo Liv - Martin got it.

OLIVIA
Shut UP.

SOME BOY
I'm serious.

OLIVIA
Oh my god.

Olivia laughs as the boy laughs and passes. Kayla laughs too.

KAYLA
What was that?

OLIVIA
Stupid inside joke.

KAYLA
Oh cool.

OLIVIA
So I have like two study periods
today, which is sweet cause we
won't be, like, sitting in boring
ass classes all day--

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(calling to someone)
Babs! Babs, did you do the thing
for Kiley's class?

BABS (16) stands by her locker.

BABS
Fuck no.

OLIVIA
Thank god.

Olivia and Kayla keep walking. Kayla looks at Olivia, in complete awe of her. Olivia has everything that Kayla could possibly want.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Feel free to ask me any questions.

KAYLA
Okay, cool. Um...how do uh...or um,
why is...

OLIVIA
If you don't have a question yet,
it's fine.

KAYLA
Okay.

OLIVIA
(laughs)
Ohmygod you are literally the
cutest. I think we're best friends.
Is it okay if we're already best
friends?

KAYLA
Hahah! Yeah, yeah, totally.

They continue down the hall, Kayla unable to wipe the smile off her face.

KAYLA (V.O.)
Hey guys! It's Kayla, back with another video. So today I want to talk about - GROWING. UP.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM. LATER.

Kayla sits at a small desk in the back of a crowded classroom. She is half the size of every other kid.

All the students look forward, staring bored at an unseen teacher. Kayla looks all around her, smiling, so happy to be here.

KAYLA (V.O.)
Okay, so Growing Up can be a little bit scary and weird but it's also really good because you get to change things that you might not like about yourself and that's good because change is a good thing.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL DANCE STUDIO. LATER.

Kayla sits against the wall of the studio. We pull back to reveal the dance class that Kayla is observing. She smiles, truly happy.

KAYLA (V.O.)
Okay, so I'm an eighth grader which means next year I will be in HIGH SCHOOL. Now high school is a lot different than middle school because middle school is, like, really, um, like, well, in middle school everyone is a lot younger than high schoolers and when you're young, you haven't changed as much as when you're older.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL AMPHITHEATER. LATER.

Kayla sits and eats lunch with Olivia who is chatting and laughing with her friend ANIYAH. Kayla watches, smiling, in awe.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So, yeah, high schoolers have changed more than middle schoolers and since change is a good thing that means that high schoolers are really good. Okay - next thing about Growing Up. Um...yeah, okay so...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL FOYER. LATER.

Olivia and Kayla stand by the trophy case, exchanging numbers in each other's phones. They hug, say goodbye, and Kayla walks out of the high school and into the dizzying rush of high schoolers leaving school for the day.

KAYLA (V.O.)

...yeah, okay, so the thing about Growing Up is that it's GOING TO HAPPEN. So DON'T FIGHT IT. Some parts of Growing Up will be hard and not good but I promise that Growing Up will eventually get REALLY GOOD. I used to be afraid of Growing Up but then I realized that it's going to make everything better and now I can't WAIT to Grow Up.

Kayla looks around, taking everything in, smiling.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER THAT DAY.

Kayla speaks to her webcam.

KAYLA

Cool. Okay. If you liked this video please share it and subscribe to my channel. Thanks for watching! Bye!!!

Kayla hits the spacebar to stop the recording.

She takes her phone out of her pocket and unlocks it. Goes to her CONTACT LIST. Scrolls through the few names she has, down to a contact named: OLIVIA HIGH SCHOOL.

She opens the contact. It's a phone number. She stares at the screen.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

(practicing)

Hey, Olivia!...Hey, Olivia, it's
Kayla, just checkin' in!...Hey,
Olivia, it's Kayla, just wanted to
call and say thank you for today I
had a ton of fun....

Kayla takes a deep breath. Presses the number, holds the phone up to her ear. Waits. It rings. Once. Twice. He answers.

OLIVIA ON PHONE

Hello?

KAYLA

Hey...

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER.

Kayla paces the length of her room, earbud headphones in. She's holding the small microphone attached to one of the two headphones' wires up to her mouth.

KAYLA

Yeah, yeah, totally.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

(voice distorted through
headphones)

It's like, honestly, like screw
those girls, they're just trying so
hard to be cool.

KAYLA

Hahaha, yeah, totally.

OLIVIA

I mean it, Kayla, don't stress
about that stuff.

KAYLA

Thanks. I won't.

OLIVIA

Eighth grade is the worst. It's
THE. WORST. I was a complete mess
when I when was your age.

KAYLA

Really??

OLIVIA

Oh my god, yes.

KAYLA

Haha, wow...hey, I just want to say thank you so much for talking to me. I wasn't sure if calling you would be weird.

OLIVIA

Ohmygod not weird at all, anytime Kayla, I gave you my number, this is what it's for.

KAYLA

Hahaha thanks. It's really nice to just be able to talk to someone that's older and cool and stuff.

OLIVIA

Well I don't know how cool I am.

Olivia laughs, Kayla doesn't.

KAYLA

(not getting it)

I actually think you're pretty cool

(then)

I actually don't have a ton of friends at school, cause everyone's stupid like you said, so it's really cool that you're being nice to me cause you're really cool hahaha.

OLIVIA

I made all of my close friends in high school. All that's stuff gonna happen for you.

KAYLA

Hahaha thanks.

OLIVIA

.....

KAYLA

.....

OLIVIA

Hey, I don't know if you're around or allowed or whatever, but me and some friends are heading to the mall to just hang if you feel like you wanna come.

KAYLA

.....

Kayla stops, hangs up the phone, rips her earbuds out, and FREAKS - doing little hops, exhaling, breathing heavy. So excited.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

OhmygodohmygodohmygodOHMYGOD.

She takes a deep breath, tries to quickly calm herself. She picks up her phone off the bed, unplugs the earbuds, dials, holds the phone to her ear, closes her eyes and waits.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

....HEY! Sorry about that, I have bad service at my house. I'd love to hang out if that's still-
...GREAT, COOL....COOL...Cool, yeah, cool. Okay, cool, great. See you then!...Okay...you too--I mean, me too hahaha. Yeah, cool. Okay!
Bye!

Kayla hangs up, sits on her bed. She smiles.

INT. KAYLA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN. LATER

Dad washes dishes in the sink.

Kayla watches him, unseen, getting ready to approach.

She takes a deep breath and steps forward.

KAYLA

Dad?

Dad turns.

DAD

Yeah? What's up? Something wrong?

KAYLA

...Can I go out with my friends tonight?

Dad stares at her. Turns off the sink. Turns back towards her. Stares. Not sure how to proceed.

DAD
...it's a Tuesday.

KAYLA
I know.

DAD
...is it kids from school?

KAYLA
Yeah.

DAD
Do I know them?

KAYLA
I don't know...No...

DAD
.....

KAYLA
.....

DAD
But it's Tuesday.

KAYLA
You're always saying that I need to do more stuff and not just sit around all the time and now I finally have something to do and I know it's a school night but school's almost over and classes don't even matter anymore...

DAD
...What do you want me to say, Kayla?

KAYLA
Daddd.

DAD
I'm ASKING. I'm really asking you. What should I do here? I'm happy you're making friends.

KAYLA
I already have friends, these are friends I've had for a while now.

DAD

Good, I'm glad, that's awesome. And I want you to hang out with them, Kayla, I really do. It's just, it's Tuesday.

KAYLA

I KNOW IT'S TUESDAY, STOP SAYING THAT.

DAD

Why are you angry at me right now??? You asked me a question and I'm just thinking about it, I'm not even saying 'no' yet.

KAYLA

Because it's.....You know everyone else my age just sneaks out and doesn't ask their dad if they can do stuff but I'm too scared cause I'm a loser so I ask you and then this happens.

DAD

I'm glad you asked me, I want you to ask me.

KAYLA

.....

DAD

Go...go hang out with your friends.

KAYLA

Thank you.

Kayla leaves.

Comes back.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

Can you drive me?

INT. CAR. LATER.

Dad drives. Stares ahead. Kayla texts on her phone, squinting as if in slight pain.

On Kayla's screen, a text from Olivia: **we just got here xo :)))**

Kayla responds: **cool! i'm almost there!**

Contrary to her emoticon, Kayla is nervous, agitated. She notices her father. Goes back to texting. Looks up again.

KAYLA

Can you not look like that please?

DAD

Wh-? What, like what?

KAYLA

Just like the way you're looking.

DAD

Looking at the road?

KAYLA

You can look at the road, Dad, obviously I didn't mean that. Just don't be so weird and quiet while you do it.

DAD

(getting annoyed)

Sorry.....so how was the Shadow--

KAYLA

No - it's fine that you were being quiet. Just don't be weird and quiet. Cause I look over at you and it looks like you're about to drive us into a tree or something and then I get freaked out and can't text my friends, so just be quiet and drive. But just don't look so weird and sad. Please.

DAD

(gritting teeth)

...Okay.

Kayla texts. Dad looks out the window and tries to look happily out the window. It's creepier than before.

KAYLA

(not looking up)

That's worse.

EXT. MALL. LATER.

Dad and Kayla pull up to the front entrance of the mall.

DAD

Pick you up in an hour? Two?

KAYLA
I'll text you.

DAD
Okay, not too late...Is everything
all right? You seem a little--

KAYLA
Bye.

DAD
...Okay, have fun.

Kayla leaves and walks toward the mall. It's huge.

Blue

The sky is getting dark.

INT. MALL - CORRIDOR. MOMENTS LATER.

Kayla walks through the mall.

The light is nauseous. Each store a giant terrarium.

She looks down at her phone. A text from Olivia: **we're in the
food court btw**

Kayla stops and texts back: **great! walking there now.**

INT. MALL - FOOD COURT. MOMENTS LATER

A table full of friends: Olivia, ANIYAH (17), TREVOR (17) and
RILEY (16).

They talk shit and laugh.

Kayla approaches. Nervous and smiling.

OLIVIA
Kayla!

KAYLA
Hey.

Olivia jumps up and hugs her.

OLIVIA
Guys, this is Kayla. She's was my
shadow and she's suuuuper chill.
This is Aniyah, I think you met
Aniyah today, Trevor, and Riley.

THE GROUP
Hi/hey/What's up.

KAYLA
Hi.

OLIVIA
Are you hungry?

KAYLA
I'm fine.

OLIVIA
Are you sure? We're gonna eat I
think.

KAYLA
Yeah, cool I can eat.

INT. FOOD COURT. A LITTLE LATER

The group is now mid-meal, eating shitty food court food.

Kayla sits beside Olivia. Observing.

ANIYAH
I swear to GOD.

OLIVIA
Ohmygod WHAT? Nononono.

TREVOR
His feet?

ANIYAH
No, MY feet.

OLIVIA
He DM'd you a picture of your OWN
FEET?

ANIYAH
Yesss this is what I'm saying.

TREVOR
He's just trying to be nice.

ANIYAH
NICE?? He's a PERRRVV.

TREVOR
You'd know.

KAYLA
Fifth?

ANIYAH
FIFTH GRADE???

TREVOR
See? She's wired different.

OLIVIA
She's not wired different.

ANIYAH
Were kids like sending each other
nudes in fifth grade??

OLIVIA
Ewww, Aniyah, don't ask that.

ANIYAH
Why not??

TREVOR
Liv, don't kids four years older
than us feel like twenty years
older than us??

OLIVIA
No.

TREVOR
Your sister?

OLIVIA
My sister just sucks.

TREVOR
Whatever, but like on top of that:
we had twitter in middle school and
your sister didn't, that made us
different.

OLIVIA
You're not different than us,
Kayla.

TREVOR
I'm not saying it's a bad thing.
I'm just saying she had a different
experience than us.

OLIVIA
Let's just drop this.

TREVOR
 Okay, Jesus Christ, it was just
 like a fun point.

OLIVIA

TREVOR

ANIYAH

KAYLA
 ...I like the filters on snapchat.
 They're fun.

OLIVIA
 Me too.

Aniyah is staring off at to something in the distance,
 looking weirded out.

ANIYAH
 Okay, like, don't all look at the
 same time but like some creepy ass
 dude has been staring at us for
 five minutes acting like he's not.
 I've seen him pass by like four
 times.

Trevor goes to turn.

ANIYAH (CONT'D)
 DON'T. Don't look obvious. In the
 shorts.

RILEY
 Shorts?

TREVOR
 Yeah, I see him. Orange shirt.

Kayla knows before she even looks:

DAD. In the distance. Trying to look casual. Kayla looks
 over. Dad scurries away, hoping he wasn't seen.

Back at the table, Kayla has gone white. So angry, so
 embarrassed. She tries not to show it.

KAYLA
I....I think I actually left
something in a store by accident. I
gotta go get it.

OLIVIA
Okay, you want me to come with?

KAYLA
No, thank you.

Kayla gets up.

OLIVIA
You okay?

KAYLA
Yeah, I just forgot this thing, I
gotta go get it.

Kayla rushes away, head down, trying to contain it all.

INT. MALL CORRIDOR. MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON - a FIVE DOLLAR BILL going into an INSERT BILL HERE
slot.

Wider reveals, Kayla standing at one of those CLAW MACHINE
games. She stares into the pit of stuffed animals. Furious.

Wanting to cry, wanting to scream.

The claw lowers, grabs onto a stuffed animal, and lifts, the
grip too weak, the claw sliding off it, the animal remaining
where it was.

He approaches.

DAD
Hey.

KAYLA
.....

DAD
Kayla, I'm sorry.

KAYLA
Don't talk to me.

DAD
I'll lean against the wall, okay?
No one will know we're talking.

Dad leans against the wall beside the machine. Dad has to look through the glass to see her.

Kayla keeps staring at the game. Never looking up. The claw lowers again. Slips again.

DAD (CONT'D)
I wasn't spying on you.

KAYLA
.....

DAD
I didn't mean to spy on you...I was just...I'm sorry...

KAYLA
.....

DAD
I'm just a weirdo. This is just me being weird and doing weirdo stuff, I'm sorry, I just....suck.

KAYLA
.....

DAD
.....I'm sorry. You have fun with your friends.

The claw lowers. Slips.

KAYLA
.....

DAD
I'm sorry. Text me when you want me to pick you up.

KAYLA
I'll get a ride home.

DAD
.....okay.....

KAYLA
.....

DAD
.....okay, have fun. I love you. Sorry.

Dad turns to leave, turns back. Takes a twenty out of his pocket.

DAD (CONT'D)
Here take...

She stays still, doesn't reach for it. Dad places it in front of her on the machine.

DAD (CONT'D)
Have fun.

Dad leaves.

The claw lowers.

INT. MALL CORRIDOR. MOMENTS LATER

Kayla walks with a small stuffed elephant in her hand. She walks toward the food court.

Stops. Looks at the elephant, then around for a place to bail it. Walks over to a trash can.

A MOTHER her young DAUGHTER (3) pass.

Kayla makes a quick decision.

KAYLA
Excuse me?

MOTHER
Yes?

KAYLA
Um, I won this at the claw game and I can't keep it so does she want it?

MOTHER
That's so nice.
(soft voice, to daughter)
Wow, Lulu, look it's just like Mr. Noodles.

Kayla holds it out. The little girl takes it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
What do you say, Lulu?

DAUGHTER
Thank you.

KAYLA
You're welcome.

MOTHER
That's so nice, thank you.

KAYLA
No problem. Have a good night.

MOTHER
You too.

They walk away. Kayla stands in place. She smiles.

BEGIN SEQUENCE: KAYLA AND THE HIGH SCHOOL KIDS

INT. MALL - VARIOUS. NIGHT

The group wanders around the mall, doing the random, aimless shit kids do:

- The group tries on sunglasses from a kiosk. Olivia puts a giant pair on Kayla. They both laugh.
- The group walks down the corridor. Kayla the shortest, smiling, just so happy to be part of all this.
- Trevor rides one of those stupid kiddie rides, squeezing his huge frame onto it. Aniyah watches, laughing and rolling * her eyes. Kayla, Olivia and Riley ride on a mini carousel.
*
- Kayla and Olivia in a photobooth taking pictures together.
- The group wanders into a clothing store. Tries on stuff.
- They get cookies.
- They smell candles.

The group does all the silly, stupid things kids do at a mall, Kayla laughs and smiles, Olivia looks out for her, making sure Kayla is having a good time.

And she is.

END OF SEQUENCE.

INT. RILEY'S CAR. LATER

Riley drives. Olivia sits shotgun. Kayla in the seat directly behind Riley. Just the three of them. Olivia has turned in her seat to face more towards Kayla. The group laughs.

OLIVIA
Aniyah and Trev need to CHILL.

RILEY
I know. It's like I can't say anything around them.

OLIVIA
They can just be....a lot.

They laugh.

KAYLA
Thanks for driving me.

RILEY
No worries, we're all in the same sort of area.

OLIVIA
Did you have fun, Kayla?

KAYLA
Yeah, totally.

OLIVIA
Good. I'm glad. You're so easy and fun and to be around. Isn't she?

Riley laughs.

RILEY
Totally.

OLIVIA
That's what high school's gonna be like for you, Kayla, just easy, fun, screwing around. It's all just stupid, you know? Everyone's as stupid as you.

Kayla laughs.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I'm not saying you're stupid, I just mean, you know, everyone's dumb and you just get to be dumb together.

KAYLA
Hahaha, I know what you mean.

The car turns.

OLIVIA
You wanna drop her off first?

RILEY
You're right here.

OLIVIA
We should get her back, it's late.

KAYLA
It's fine!

OLIVIA
Yeah?

KAYLA
Yeah, all good.

OLIVIA
Okay, cool.

The car stops. Olivia gets out of the car.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
This was fun!

KAYLA
Totally!

OLIVIA
Let's hang out again soon!

KAYLA
That'd be awesome!

OLIVIA
Cool. Okay, you're great, you're
awesome, you're the best,
goodnight.

KAYLA
Hahaha night.

OLIVIA
Bye Riles.

RILEY
Byyyye.

Olivia closes the door.

The car pulls away.

Just Riley and Kayla now. Riley driving. Kayla in the seat behind him.

It's quiet for a while.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Olivia's cool, yeah?

KAYLA
Totally. She's the best.

RILEY
Yeah, we're like best friends.

KAYLA
Really?

RILEY
Yeah.

KAYLA
That's awesome.

RILEY
.....

KAYLA
.....

RILEY
Kind of awkward talking when you're
in the back seat.

KAYLA
Yeah hahaha.

RILEY
Here, hold on.

Riley pulls the car over on the side of the street and stops.

KAYLA
Should I get in the front?

RILEY
No, it's all good.

Riley turns off the car. And gets out.

Kayla waits, frozen in the back seat. Not quite sure what is happening right now.

Riley enters the back seat from the passenger side and sits beside Kayla.

Kayla smiles at him, nervous, then faces ahead.

RILEY (CONT'D)

So...you excited about next year?

KAYLA

Yeah, totally.

RILEY

You should be. You're like the coolest freshman I've met and you're not even a freshman yet.

Kayla laughs, shifts.

KAYLA

Thanks.

RILEY

You gotta be careful with guys, though. They'll be all over you next year.

KAYLA

(taken aback, blushing)
Wh-...really?

RILEY

Oh definitely. They'll all want you.

KAYLA

Haha yeah right.

RILEY

I'm serious.

A long silence. Then:

RILEY (CONT'D)

Truth or Dare?

KAYLA

What?

RILEY

Truth or Dare? You play Truth or Dare before?

KAYLA

...yeah.

RILEY

Truth or Dare?

KAYLA

Um.....truth.

RILEY

Okayyy.....uhhhh....how far have you gone?

KAYLA

...how far have I gone?

RILEY

Yeah, like...first base, second base--

KAYLA

Oh yeah, totally, I know, I was just thinking...trying to remember...like recently or all time?

RILEY

All time.

KAYLA

Hm.....probably....third?

RILEY

Whoa.

KAYLA

You know what actually just second I think, I get confused and mix second and third up sometimes haha.

RILEY

...You're funny...It's okay if you haven't done anything.

KAYLA

....yeah....

RILEY

Wanna ask me?

KAYLA

Okay...How far have you gone?

RILEY
No, Truth or Dare?

KAYLA
Oh Ha ha, yeah, durrrr, um, Truth or Dare?

RILEY
Dare.

KAYLA
Okay....um....

Kayla looks around, trying to think of something. She bends down, picks up something.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
Put this quarter in your mouth.

RILEY
Ew!!

KAYLA
(panicked)
Sorry, you don't have to, what do you want to do?

RILEY
(pretending to think)
Um....I don't know...I could take off my shirt? Is that stupid?

KAYLA
(forgetting to breathe)
.....no.

Riley takes off his shirt. Kayla blushes hard. Tries not to look. Heart pounding out of her chest.

RILEY
Truth or Dare?

KAYLA
.....Truth.

RILEY
Aw you're no fun.

KAYLA
.....Okay....Dare.....

A long silence. The worst.

RILEY
Take your shirt off.

KAYLA
Um...I'm not really *comfortable*
with that.

RILEY
Do you think *I'm* comfortable right
now?

KAYLA
Heh-uh...

RILEY
Just relaxxx, take a deep breath,
it's fine, come on, take your shirt
off.

He touches her shoulder. She explodes.

KAYLA
NO.
(then, tiny)
Sorry.

Riley backs off. Kayla frozen.

After a moment. Riley puts his shirt back on.

INT. RILEY'S CAR. LATER

Riley drives, staring straight ahead. Kayla sits behind him,
head down. The mood has shifted. A long, tense silence.

KAYLA
I'm really sorry.

RILEY
It's fine.

KAYLA
.....I'm sorry.

RILEY
IT'S FINE.

Kayla shuts up, scared. Riley regains his composure.

RILEY (CONT'D)
It's just...look this was about
you. I'm trying to help you.

KAYLA
I know, I'm sorry.

RILEY
(angry)
Stop saying you're sorry. I said it was fine so stop saying that, okay?

KAYLA
Okay.

RILEY
I was trying to help you. I-....And now you're gonna have your first hookup with some asshole at a party next year and you're not gonna be good at it and he's gonna tell all his friends about it and you're gonna get made fun of and feel like shit. Do you want that?

KAYLA
No.

RILEY
I didn't need this. You did. I'm on the other side, already. I hook up all the time. I know what I'm doing.

KAYLA
I know--

RILEY
But I thought to myself, you know what, this Kayla is a good girl and she needs to be looked out for...so I'm gonna do her a favor. I'm gonna let her hook up with me and I'm gonna let her make mistakes and I'm not gonna judge her if she's not good at it. I'm just gonna be there for her and I'm gonna give her tips and I'm gonna help her get good at hooking up with guys.

KAYLA
I know...I really appreciate it. Really. I know you're just trying to help me. It's just...I don't know...I'm sor--...I just didn't want to do it...It was just a lot all at once.

Riley shakes his head.

RILEY
I tried to help.

KAYLA
I know.

RILEY
But you don't want help.

KAYLA
I do. I really do.

RILEY
No you don't.

They drive in silence. Tears well in Kayla's eyes.

KAYLA
Please don't tell your Olivia about
this.

RILEY
I won't.

KAYLA
Thank you.

EXT. STREET. MOMENTS LATER

Riley's car pulls up on Kayla's street corner.

KAYLA
Goodnight.

Kayla closes the door and the car drives away.

Kayla begins walking down the street, fists and body clenched, breathing through her nose. We get close and follow her as she walks down the dark suburban street back, moving quickly, tense and pained.

INT. KAYLA'S HOUSE. LATER.

Kayla walks through the front door, moving quickly through the house towards her room.

INT. KAYLA'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Kayla enters her room, closes the door, and finally lets go.

She collapses onto the floor by her bed, sobbing into her hands. It is loud and heavy. Her body shakes.

DAD (O.S.)

Honey?

Dad enters the bedroom and rushes over to Kayla.

DAD (CONT'D)

Kayla, what's wrong?? What happened?

He kneels on the ground beside her - rubs her back. He drops off his knees so that he is sitting on the ground with her, holding her while she cries.

DAD (CONT'D)

Jesus, sweetheart, what happened?...honey, honey, what happened? God, ff-, Kayla. Are you okay? You can tell me...Kayla what's wrong?...oh sweetheart, it's fine, it's okay...it's okay...I'm here, I'm here, I'm right here, I'm right here, I'm right here.

Dad hugs her. She does not hug him back. She has her knees up to her chest, her arms wrapped around her knees, her eyes shut tight, trying to collapse herself to a single point.

CUT TO BLACK:

KAYLA (V.O.)

Hey guys, it's Kayla.

Her voice is quiet and unaffected, her usual energy gone. She speaks slowly, thinking out loud.

INT. KAYLA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM. THE NEXT MORNING

Kayla, standing in front of the mirror, covers her face in concealer. Applies eyeliner.

Her eyes are puffy from crying all night.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So...I'm making this video to say that I don't think I'm gonna be making anymore videos for a while, I think.

(MORE)

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

I don't know if anyone is even watching or cares, but if you are I just want you to know that I'm gonna take a break from videos for a while and I'm sorry if that's a bummer for you but I think it's the right thing to do.

INT. MILES GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM. LATER. 64

It's before class has started, kids chat, leaning towards each other in their small desk chairs. Kayla sits in the middle of this, talking to no one. Zoning out.

KAYLA (V.O.)

I started making videos, um, I started making videos so I could give, like, advice and stuff and give you guys tips on what to do to make your lives better or whatever but, um...I don't know, it's-...

INT. MILES GROVE CAFETERIA. LATER.

Kayla sits by herself, eating a sandwich. No list-making. No looking around her for kids to potentially approach. She's as quiet as we've ever seen her but, for the first time, resigned to be so.

KAYLA (V.O.)

If I'm being really, totally honest, I'm probably not the best person to give advice cause, I don't know, I mean I like giving advice and it's fun to give advice but...I don't know...I guess I don't really know how to do a lot of stuff. I know how to talk about stuff, but I'm not really good at doing stuff.

INT. KAYLA'S HOUSE BATHROOM. LATER

Kayla sits in a stall on the toilet, browsing her phone, pants on, just wanting some privacy.

KAYLA

And I'm...I'm really nervous ...like, all the time, like...for no reason.

(MORE)

KAYLA (CONT'D)

Like I'll be nervous even when there's nothing to be nervous about really. Like...it's sort of like when you wait in line for a roller coaster and you have that nervous stomach, like I feel like that all the time, like every day, and I don't ever get that feeling you get after you ride the roller coaster when you feel better. It's just like I'm waiting in the line all the time. And I try really hard not feel like that but, I don't know, I just can't.

INT. MILES GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY. LATER.

Kayla walks down the hallway, her backpack on, hands on either strap by her shoulders, her eyes somewhere on the floor in front of her.

KAYLA (V.O.)

And so like if you guys are going through tough times, or whatever, you deserve somebody who knows how to get through tough times, you know? Like you deserve someone who's good at making themselves feel better, cause then maybe they can help you feel better.

Kayla turns a corner and continues down the hallway and away from us. On a nearby wall is a bulletin board displaying the eighth grade class superlatives.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So yeah, those are, um, some of the reasons I'm gonna take break from videos for a while. Thanks for watching and I hope you all have good lives. I'll see you around, maybe. Bye.

Among the dozen or so pictures is the one for MOST QUIET. It shows a strange boy with his finger to his lips. He is shushing the tiny girl beside him, who is hunched over a book, her face barely visible.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. THAT NIGHT.

Kayla lies on her bed, lights on, on her phone. She's on Instagram, scrolling through her feed.

Comments being posted, friends tagging each other in pictures, new relationships budding and breaking, Kayla looks but doesn't participate.

KENNEDY GRAVES posted five pictures: SUMMER POOL PARTY!!! Kayla swipes through the mini. Everyone is happy and energetic and having a blast. She can't find herself in any of the photos.

She arrives at the group picture at the diving board. She's not in it. Kayla stares at the photo and then closes her eyes.

BLOOP. An Instagram chat from Gabe.

From Gabe: **did you see the photos Kennedy posted?**

Kayla responds: **no.**

Gabe: **there stupid. she didn't post any of my handstand pics.**

Kayla: **that sucks**

Gabe: **it's fine. how are you?**

Kayla: **i actually have to go. Lots of homework. Sorry.**

Kayla turns off her phone, rolls over onto her side and faces the wall.

INT. KAYLA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Dad is on the couch, browsing his Kindle with reading glasses on. Kayla walks in behind him.

KAYLA

Will you help me burn something in the backyard?

DAD

.....Yep.

EXT. KAYLA'S BACKYARD. LATER.

Kayla and Dad are sitting next to each other on plastic lawn chairs around a small fire burning in the patio's fire-pit.

Kayla looks down at the TIME CAPSULE in her lap.

Its writing glows by the light of the fire: TO THE COOLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD.

DAD
You sure you want to do this?

KAYLA
Yes.

DAD
I'm not exactly sure what "this"
is...or means...I'm just hoping
that whatever we're doing here is a
positive thing...?

KAYLA
Yeah...

DAD
Alright then.

Kayla places the box in the fire pit. It starts to burn.

Kayla and Dad watch it.

DAD (CONT'D)
What was in there?

KAYLA
Nothing, really. Just...sort of my
hopes and dreams.

DAD
.....Right.....and you're burning
them?

KAYLA
Yes.

DAD
Alright.

Dad puts his arm around his daughter and watches the fire with her. As always, he's searching for something - anything - to say or do to make his daughter happier.

And just as he's about to say something, just as he's about to make another admirable and kind and probably slightly off-the-mark attempt at helping the little girl that he loves so very very much, more than anything, she speaks:

KAYLA
Do I make you sad?

DAD

Wh-.....Sweetheart, no. No. Not at all. Kayla - not at all. Do I seem sad?

KAYLA

No.

DAD

Then why would you think you make me sad?

KAYLA

I don't know...Sometimes I think that, like, when I grow up, maybe I'll have a daughter. And then, like, I was thinking, if she was like me, I think that would make me really sad all the time. Cause I would love her a lot because she's my daughter but...I don't know, I guess if she ended up being like me, I think being her mom would make me really sad.

Kayla stares down at her lap, picks at her nails.

Dad pauses, devastated, and then leans in, purposefully, sternly, and says what may be the only thing that he is absolutely, one hundred thousand percent certain of.

DAD

You're wrong. Kayla...Kayla, look at me:

(she does)

You're wrong...If you grow up to have a daughter like you, she will make you so, so happy. Being your dad makes me so happy, Kayla. You don't know. You don't know how happy you make me. It's beyond anything. I can't describe it to you. And it's not just because you're my daughter. It's not because I'm your dad and I would love you no matter what. It's because of you. Do you understand? A lot of parents, Kayla, a lot of parents have to love their kids in spite of who they are. Not me. I get to love you because of who you are. Do you get that? Kayla, you are so good. You're such a good person.

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

I'm not just saying this, Kayla. It's true. Kayla, look at me. Look at me: It's so easy to love you. It's so easy to be proud of you. I really mean that. And yeah, sometimes when I see you're upset or having a rough day, it makes me sad. But that being sad, that sort of day-to-day sad stuff or worrying that I do is, it's -- Kayla, I am always, beneath all that stuff, always just so unbelievably happy that I get to be your dad.

(a pause, a deep breath, a decision)

...Kayla, when your mom left, I was really scared. Like really, really scared. Because now I was all alone with this little girl that I loved so much and wanted everything for and I wasn't sure if I could give you what you needed so I was really scared. I was scared that you weren't going to be okay. I was scared just like you are right now. More scared. Way more...But then you got older. And you took your first steps, and you said your first words, and you wrote your first letter to Nana and you made your first friend; and everything that I thought I was going to have to teach you - how to be nice, how to share, how to care about other people's feelings - you just started doing on your own. Your teachers would say, "you've got such a lovely daughter, you've done such a great job with her." But I didn't do anything. I really didn't. I just watched. And the more I watched you, the less scared I got. I stopped being scared a long time ago, Kayla. You know why? Because of you. You made me brave, Kayla. And if you could just see yourself like I see you...the way you really are, the way you always have been...I promise you wouldn't be scared either.

Kayla scoots out of her chair and onto her dad's lap. She hugs him tight, hugs him in a way that she hasn't in a very long time. He hugs her back.

The fire burns. The hug does not break.

EXT. GABE'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Kayla is at the back door of a small house. She goes to knock, stops. Turns and walks away. Stops. Turns back to the house. Walks back to the front door. Stops. Takes a deep breath and knocks.

Gabe answers the door, dressed in khaki pants and a shirt and tie - his hair gelled in a neat part. He is nervous.

GABE
Hi Kayla.

KAYLA
Hi Gabe.

GABE
You look really nice.

KAYLA
Thank you. You too.

GABE
Thanks. You want to watch a movie later?

KAYLA
Sure.

GABE
Cool.

A long pause.

GABE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Come on in.

Kayla steps inside.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Gabe's house is small and messy. Kayla stands stiffly as Gabe closes the door, turns to Kayla, and does a slow bow at the waist, hands at his side.

GABE
Welcome.

KAYLA
Thank you.

GABE
How are you tonight?

KAYLA
Good, you?

GABE
I'm good and you?

KAYLA
Good.

GABE
Cool...May I take your coat?

KAYLA
Sure.

Gabe helps Kayla out of her hoodie like a gentleman. Then holds the hoodie awkwardly, not sure what to do next.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
I can hold it.

GABE
Okay.

Gabe hands her hoodie to her.

GABE (CONT'D)
Are you hungry?

KAYLA
Yeah, sure.

GABE
Cool.

Gabe starts walking, Kayla follows. Gabe leads her into the kitchen where he has set up a romantic DIY dinner for two at the table -- two lit candles, two glasses of soda and two plates full of chicken tenders and fries.

Everything has been set up very neatly and carefully.

KAYLA
Wow.

GABE
Do you like chicken tenders?

KAYLA
Yeah.

GABE

Cool. I got a twenty piece and I also got two of every kind of sauce - but if you have a favorite sauce and want more than one packet of it, you can have mine. I like all the sauces equally.

KAYLA

Thanks.

Kayla walks toward one of the chairs. Gabe pulls it out for her and she sits.

GABE

The chicken tenders have been sitting out for a little bit because I didn't know when you'd be here so tell me if they're too cold and I can heat them up in the microwave.

KAYLA

Okay.

GABE

Whoops, left this out by accident.

Gabe picks up a PIECE OF PAPER that was sitting right beside Kayla's plate. He stands in front of her, holding it.

GABE (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to leave this out. Sorry. So stupid.

KAYLA

No problem.

Gabe doesn't move. Holds the paper out to Kayla.

GABE

You wanna see it? It's stupid.

KAYLA

Sure.

She grabs it and looks at it. It's a cheap, print-out award with Gabe's name on it.

GABE

It's stupid.

KAYLA

What is it?

GABE

I go to archery camp every summer and last summer I got five bull's eyes in a day so they gave me the Sharpshooter of the Week Award.

KAYLA

Wow. That's really cool.

GABE

It's stupid.

Gabe takes the paper and places it on top of a nearby bureau.

He then walks over to the opposite side of the table, stops, poses, shoots an imaginary arrow and then takes his seat opposite Kayla.

He grabs his glass of soda and holds it up.

GABE (CONT'D)

To our first friend hang out!

Kayla smiles and lifts her glass. They toast and drink. Gabe digs in to the tenders. Kayla eats cautiously, careful not to mess up her lip gloss.

GABE (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming.

KAYLA

No problem.

Kayla eats a single fry in three bites.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

I like your house.

GABE

Thanks. It's my mom's.

KAYLA

Cool.

GABE

What movie do you want to watch?

KAYLA

What ones do you have?

GABE

I have Netflix so we can watch anything. What kind of movies do you like? What genre?

KAYLA

Um...I don't know. What do you like?

GABE

Lots of stuff. I can watch scary movies without being scared.

KAYLA

Cool.

GABE

The tenders are a little cold.

KAYLA

They're fine.

GABE

Okay, good. I actually kind of think they're better when they're cold.

KAYLA

Me too.

GABE

Cool.

They eat in silence for a bit.

GABE (CONT'D)

Do you believe in God?

KAYLA

Um...yes.

GABE

Cool.

More eating.

GABE (CONT'D)

Know any good jokes?

KAYLA

Jokes? Um...

GABE

I know a few. Okay, so you know how bikes have two tires? Like on the wheels?

KAYLA

Yeah, totally.

GABE
 Okay, so why couldn't the bicycle
 stand up?

KAYLA
 Why?

GABE
 Because it was too tired.

Kayla laughs a little out her nose, nervous.

KAYLA
 That's a good one.

GABE
 I made it up.

KAYLA
 Wow, that's really funny.

GABE
 Do you have any?

KAYLA
 Um.....what did the fish say, hold
 on...what did the fish say when he
 swam into the concrete wall--

Damn.

GABE

Damn.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

GABE (CONT'D)
 I've heard that one, that's a good
 one, I like that one.

KAYLA
 Thanks.

GABE
 You have a good sense of humor and
 that's what I like so it's good
 that you have that.

KAYLA
 Thanks.

GABE
 You're welcome.

Gabe stares at his food, looking agitated. Then:

GABE (CONT'D)
 I have to tell you something.

KAYLA
(little freaked out)
What?

GABE
I didn't make up that bike joke. My
dad told it to me.

KAYLA
Oh that's okay.

GABE
I shouldn't have lied to you I'm
sorry.

KAYLA
It's fine. I also sort of think you
made the joke you're own in the way
you said it so it's sort of like
you wrote it anyway.

Gabe smiles.

GABE
Totally.

They eat some more in silence.

GABE (CONT'D)
I watched some of your videos.

KAYLA
(embarrassed)
Oh...those are stupid.

GABE
No! No, they're really cool. You're
really smart about stuff. You know
so many things.

KAYLA
Thanks.

GABE
I was thinking you should have your
own talk show.

KAYLA
Hahaha yeah...

GABE
I'm sorry if I'm being weird, I'm
just really nervous.

KAYLA
Your not being weird.

GABE
We're having a good conversation I
think.

KAYLA
Yeah me too.

Gabe smiles. Kayla smiles back.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. LATER

Gabe and Kayla sit on the couch "together" (three feet apart,
stiff, both facing forward, nervous).

GABE
...what do you wanna do?

KAYLA
Oh...whatever.

GABE
Yeah, me too, I can do whatever.

KAYLA
...you wanna watch something?

GABE
Sure.

Gabe grabs the remote off the coffee table in front of them.

He hesitates, puts the remote back down.

GABE (CONT'D)
Actually...can I show you
something?

KAYLA
Sure.

GABE
Okay.

Gabe hops up from the couch and runs out of the room. Kayla
stays put, sitting up straight, knees bouncing, nervous.

We stay on Kayla as we hear the sounds of Gabe's frantic
search: loud footsteps down a hallway, a door opens, closes,
a pause, door opens again, more footsteps.

GABE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(just outside the room)
Okay, I'm ready to show you.

KAYLA
Okay.

GABE
It's not that cool. But maybe
you'll think it's really cool, I
don't know, it's kind of cool, I
guess.

KAYLA
Okay.

GABE
Close your eyes.

Kayla does. We stay on her as Gabe enters the room. Lots of
little, strange sounds.

GABE (CONT'D)
Keep your eyes closed.

KAYLA
Okay.

GABE
Okay, you can open your eyes.

Kayla does. Gabe is standing in front of her with his hands
behind his back. There's a large cardboard box behind him and
a laptop now open on the coffee table between Kayla and him.

GABE (CONT'D)
So, like, I told you about how I do
archery and, um, like, this is sort
of like another one of my passions.

Gabe keeps one hand behind his back as the other reaches out
and hits the laptop's spacebar. HEAVY METAL MUSIC begins to
blast as Gabe pulls TWO LARGE SILVER RINGS from behind his
back and begins his magic routine.

Gabe's hands shake with adrenaline as he does his linking
rings routine. Then reaches into the box, does more tricks -
color changing scarves, cutting and melding ropes.

The face-melting guitar doesn't quite match up with Gabe's
routine. But Gabe is taking this very seriously, too nervous
to look up at Kayla and see if she's liking it or not. He's
practiced this a thousand times, and this is it: his moment.

And as Gabe struggles through his act, messing up here, dropping a prop there, Kayla watches him.

Someone is doing something for her.

And she is watching it.

Smiling.

Her world upside-down.

The pressure, finally, for a moment, off.

EXT. STREET. GABE'S HOUSE LATER

Dad waits in his car, parked on the street in front of Gabe's house. He stares ahead, turns, sees something, smiles.

Kayla enters the car.

DAD

Hey.

KAYLA

Hey.

Dad pulls away and starts driving. We stay on the two of them, sitting quietly.

A long silence between them, then:

DAD

Did you have fun?

KAYLA

Yeah, yeah it was fun.

DAD

Good.

They drive. Both staring forward. Sitting in silence.

Together.

INT. MILES GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL - LOBBY/HALLWAY. MORNING 75

We move slowly through the lobby. The floor somehow both scuffed and shiny. A giant trophy case with way too much in it. A high ceiling.

And empty.

PRINCIPAL MCDANIEL (O.S.)
Friends, Family, and Loved Ones.

The strange sounds of a speech happening in a large, nearby space. Loud and echoing and muffled through the walls. Barely discernible.

We continue to move slowly through the lobby and toward an open hallway entrance.

PRINCIPAL MCDANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Today is a celebration. A chance
for us to applaud the achievements
of these amazing kids. Miles Grove
Middle School's Class of 2017.

Applause. Even louder. Even stranger sounding. Principal Mcdaniel's speech fades to barely audible as we move down the hallway.

It's dark. Something in the distance.

We keep moving. Get closer.

Kids waiting in the dark, lined up against the right wall of the hallway in single file. Dressed in caps and gowns.

A CHAPERONE (40s) at the front of the line by the entrance to the Gym. The kids are chatting, bored, not really caring about whatever they're supposed to be caring about right now.

CHAPERONE
(whisper yelling)
Guys! Guys! We're almost there, a
few more minutes, please, please
just, guys! Shhhh, just shhhh
please and thank you.

We pass the Chaperone and continue down the line. Boy, girl, boy, girl, girl, girl, boy, boy, boy, girl, b--wait.

Kayla.

Cap too big for her head. Swimming in her gown. She stands up straight, hands clenched into fists at her side. She looks down the hall, sees something.

Aiden. He's late, hustling toward the back of the line.

Looking cute even in that stupid robe.

Kayla watches him as he passes. Then faces forward. Stares.

Then makes a decision.

She steps out of her place and begins walking quickly down the line. We follow her. She moves with confidence and purpose. Aiden's ahead, fixing his cap over his stupid head.

Kayla reaches him. And passes. Keeps walking. She finally stops and turns.

Kennedy Graves is standing with Steph and another friend. All on their phones.

KAYLA

Hey.

Kennedy looks up. Too confused to even react.

Kayla speaks the following in what seems like one breath.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

I wrote you that letter thanking you for having me to your party and you didn't write back, like not even a facebook message, and that's really stupid and mean. And being mean isn't cool, it's MEAN. When someone does something nice you're supposed to do something nice back. I'm always nice to you and you're never nice to me and that's not fair. I'm a good person and you should be nicer to me.

Kennedy looks shocked/disgusted. Kayla turns to walk away, whips back.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

(angrier)

And that card game I got you for your birthday is actually REALLY FUN and you'd know that if you actually PLAYED IT. And I know you probably think it's stupid but stupid games can be fun sometimes, like if it's raining outside or whatever, it's a great game, it's like a really fun version of Go Fish, and if you actually just tried playing it instead of trying to be cool all the time you'd realize that it's really fun game to play when you're bored. And-

Kayla turns and walks away. Back up the line. The adrenaline of the moment still coursing through her. She retakes her spot in line. Taking deep breaths to calm herself.

She smiles.

The familiar sounds of PHOTOBOOTH. BEEP BEEP BEEP CLICK:

KAYLA (V.O.)
Hey Kayla, it's me, Kayla.

The line starts to move. Kayla walks with her classmates, as the line funnels from the dark hallway through the bright door to the gymnasium.

KAYLA (V.O.)
Congrats on finishing high school!
I'm so, so, so, so, SO proud of
you.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER THAT DAY

Kayla is sitting at her desk, still in her graduation robes, speaking to her laptop's webcam.

KAYLA
It's crazy to think that you're
almost 18. You probably look a lot
different than me, which is cool,
but also if you still sort of look
like this that's cool too.

INT. KAYLA'S BEDROOM. LATER.

CLOSE ON a USB DRIVE KOALA BEAR, plugged into Kayla's laptop. Kayla pulls it out. We continue to hear Kayla's video.

KAYLA (V.O.)
How did you do on the SATs? Did you
suck at the math part? It's okay if
you did. Math is stupid.

Kayla places the Koala Bear into a BRAND NEW SHOEBOX full of tiny trinkets and keepsakes: a picture of Kayla and her dad, a bracelet, Aiden's crazy straw, the strip of pictures with Olivia from the mall photobooth, a sauce packet from Gabe's.

KAYLA (V.O.)
Do you have a boyfriend? If you
don't that's fine! And if you do, I
hope he is treating you well. You
deserve it.

Kayla puts the lid on the shoebox. On the lid, in freshly colored marker, are the words: TO THE COOLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD.

EXT. KAYLA'S BACKYARD. DAY.

Kayla places her new time capsule into a two-foot deep, crudely-dug hole in her backyard - a pile of loose dirt beside it. Dad watches her, smiling, holding a shovel. He begins shoveling the loose dirt back into the hole.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Is dad still a dork? If he's not still a dork, he's probably an alien just wearing dad's skin as a disguise and you should kill him right after you read this.

The brightly-colored shoebox disappears more and more with every shovelful of dirt.

INT. KAYLA'S BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Kayla stands in front of the mirror. Dressed for something.

Hair and makeup done up.

KAYLA (V.O.)

I hope you're not too sad about leaving all your friends for college.

Kayla lifts up her phone, poses for a selfie.

INT. DAD'S CAR. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Kayla rides shotgun. Dad drives. They are talking about something, making small talk, laughing, happy.

KAYLA (V.O.)

But if you are sad, just remember that you can still stay in touch with all of your high school friends and you'll make tons of new friends at your new school next year.

INT. MILES GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM. LATER. 81

The END OF THE YEAR DANCE is bumping. Sweaty pubescent kids grind and "dance" with each other. Kayla walks in, looking beautiful as always.

KAYLA (V.O.)

And I know you probably don't want advice from an eighth grader...

Kayla walks into the middle of the large mob of her peers.
She starts to dance.

KAYLA (V.O.)

...but I just want you to know that
if high school sucked for you, I'm
really sorry and that sucked
but...it's whatever, I mean, middle
school sucked for me but I'm past
it now and I'm moving forward. And
you can do that with high school
too.

She dances harder. Arms, hips, shoulders, head. All moving.

KAYLA (V.O.)

Just cause things are happening to
you right now, doesn't mean that
things are always going to happen
to you. You never know what's going
to happen next and that's what
makes things exciting and
scary...and fun...

She is dancing her heart out. No one is paying attention. She
doesn't notice. She doesn't care. Eyes closed. Hips and arms
and hair wildly in motion.

KAYLA (V.O.)

So yeah, stay cool and I can't wait
to be you....Love, Kayla.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END.