

Life, According To Me

Pilot

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EXT. SCHOOL- NOON

Manchester. Princess Parkway. A jam packed main road.
We come to a three-storey block of 1960s brickwork. A fading
grey sign reads: 'Blackrock Secondary School'.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- SAME

The jungle that is the hallway after the bell has rung.
Pupils (navy blue uniforms) pushing and shoving, all hurrying
to get to the cafeteria at the end of the hallway.

INT. CLASSROOM- SAME

All on her own in this room is CAYLA RAY (15). She's at that
awkward age where she isn't yet a woman but she's too old to
be considered a girl. She's short with curly, messy hair. Her
uniform is second hand and doesn't fit well.

She eats a sandwich, while reading a book.

The door opens and TREVOR (15) comes in. He walks with a limp
and wears glasses that accentuate his bulbous eyes.

TREVOR
Mind if I join you?

CAYLA
Yes.

Trevor sits anyway.

TREVOR
What you eating?

CAYLA
Food.

TREVOR
(smiles)
Me too.
(beat)
P.E next.

CAYLA
I can't hold my excitement.

INT. GIRLS CHANGING ROOM- AFTERNOON

Everyone is changing, apart from Cayla who is drawing.
She keeps glancing across the room at a beautiful girl,
SAOIRSE (15, arty, long hair).

AIMEE

Why do you keep looking at Saoirse?

AIMEE and FIONA have come over, with two OTHER GIRLS standing behind. Aimee is the ring leader of the pack. Both her and Fiona have peroxide blonde hair and wear too much makeup.

AIMEE

Did you hear me? Why are you staring at her?

CAYLA

I wasn't.

FIONA

Are you like gay for her?

CAYLA

I wasn't looking at her.

AIMEE

They shouldn't let you get changed with us. There should be a rule against it.

They walk off, smirking. Saoirse approaches Cayla.

SAOIRSE

(Irish accent)

I didn't say you were looking at me.

CAYLA

I don't care. I wasn't.

MS. WILLIAMS (38, very tall) walks into the changing rooms.

MS. WILLIAMS

Okay ladies, save the chit chat, let's go, come on.

(notices Cayla)

Ms Ray. Why aren't you changed?

CAYLA

I haven't got my kit.

MS. WILLIAMS

Again?

CAYLA

It's my Mum. She hasn't had the time to wash it.

MS. WILLIAMS

Your Mum? Tell me Cayla, d'you not like my class? Because there's always some excuse.

CAYLA

No it's not that -- My Mum's been ill, so she forgot and I-

MS. WILLIAMS

No, you're not getting out of this again.

CAYLA

But I can't-

MS. WILLIAMS

I don't wanna hear it. Get some clothes out of lost property.

LATER

Cayla roots through the lost property basket. She shudders as she touches a wet t-shirt. Keeps looking. Slim pickings.

EXT. ASTROTURF- AFTERNOON

Cayla joins the class outside. Her outfit is ridiculous. Her shirt and shorts are way too small for her. She knows it too.

AIMEE

Look, it's the fat ray.

FIONA

Ugh. Looking at you makes me feel physically sick.

Cayla isn't fat but the clothes aren't flattering.

AIMEE

You should chill out on the mars bars Cayla the whale-a.

CAYLA

That's not even a real word.

AIMEE

I'll show you a real word.

CAYLA

Still doesn't make sense.

AIMEE

You think you're so smart, don't you? Well I'm gonna teach you a lesson, smart girl.

LATER

The girls are all playing hockey. Cayla is not really involved in the game or interested. Without her seeing, Aimee runs behind Cayla and swipes her legs with the hockey stick.

AIMEE

Take that you cu-

INT. GIRLS CHANGING ROOM- AFTERNOON

Cayla nurses her leg, a bruise is starting to show. She waits whilst everyone changes.

Aimee walks past and knocks Cayla's bag to the floor, spilling her drawings and notebook.

MS. WILLIAMS

(walks over)

Here let me help you with that-

CAYLA

No you don't have to-

Ms. Williams picks up Cayla's drawings. Looks at one.

MS. WILLIAMS

(worried)

What the...

INT. STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE- AFTERNOON

Motivational posters litter the walls. Cayla is seated across from MR. IQBAL (33). British Asian. Relentlessly upbeat.

MR. IQBAL

Thanks for taking the time to come see me Cayla.

CAYLA

I thought I didn't have a choice?

MR. IQBAL

Still, I'm glad you here.

(beat)

Now, your teacher was a little concerned with some of the things you've been drawing.

He motions to Cayla's drawings. We get a glimpse of the cartoon-like pictures.

MR. IQBAL

Who are the people in this picture?

CAYLA

Nobody. They're just drawings.

MR. IQBAL

You know, anything you tell me here is strictly confidential. Won't leave this room.

(no response)

I'd hate to have to get your parents involved in this...

CAYLA

...It's Fiona and Aimee.

MR. IQBAL

I've heard they can be a bit... difficult.

CAYLA

There's another word I can think of...

MR. IQBAL

And what's happening to them in this picture? Is that a knife?

CAYLA

No.

MR. IQBAL

Oh good.

CAYLA

It's a machete.

MR. IQBAL

And Aimee's drowning I guess?

CAYLA

No. That's a vat of acid.

MR. IQBAL

So the red stuff is blood...

(beat)

I'd like to do some word associations with you, if that's alright?

CAYLA

Do I have a choice?

MR. IQBAL

We always have a choice -- But no, you have to do this...

(takes out cards)

I want you to just say the first thing that comes to your mind. Don't think about it -- the words are totally random. I'll give you an example, if I say dog you'd probably say: cat. Or if I said teacher you'd probably say...

CAYLA

Failure.

MR. IQBAL

Uh well yes if that's your opinion. Okay let's go: Friends...

CAYLA

Enemies.

MR. IQBAL

School.

CAYLA

Hell.

MR. IQBAL

Discipline.

CAYLA

Pain.

MR. IQBAL

Life.

CAYLA

Struggle.

MR. IQBAL

Death.

CAYLA

Release.

Mr. Iqbal puts the cards down.

MR. IQBAL

Maybe we'll come back to them.

CAYLA
 (feigns innocence)
 Did I do okay?

MR. IQBAL
 Oh no, there's no right or wrong in
 this test. No judgement.

We see him writing 'anger issues'. He stops. Looks up.

MR. IQBAL
 (softly)
 You've had a bad day today Cayla
 but try and focus on the positives.
 You know, 'Life will always give
 you another chance. It's called
 tomorrow.'

Cayla takes this in.

CAYLA
 But what if tomorrow's worse?

EXT. STREET- EVENING

A line of small terraced houses on a busy Manchester street.
 We stop at one of the houses. It looks like it could do with
 a new paint job.

In front of the house is a dented Ford KA. RICHMOND RAY (49)
 is inside the car, on his phone. Thinning hair. Always
 wearing a suit. Control freak.

INT. RAY HOUSEHOLD- DINING ROOM/LOUNGE- SAME

Around the table is Cayla's mother MOIRA (48, tireless).
 Cayla's older sister ELLA (18, blonde) and Cayla's younger
 brother DANNY (10, speaks with lisp). Cayla is also present.

DANNY
 Can we eat yet?

MOIRA
 We're waiting for your Father.

ELLA
 But he's always late. I haven't
 eaten in like two hours.

MOIRA
 How was school Cayla?

CAYLA

Wonderful Mother, I do so look forward to the delights that the morrow will bring.

DANNY

Was that English?

ELLA

Well I got through a whole season of Derry Girls today.

CAYLA

You must be so proud of yourself.

MOIRA

(to Ella)

No luck with the job applications then?

ELLA

It's not a good time to apply for work. Brexit is seriously messing up the job market.

CAYLA

I don't think Brexit will stop you getting that job at Greggs.

DANNY

Will I like secondary school Cayla?

CAYLA

No.

DANNY

Why not?

CAYLA

In P.E today I got called a cunt.

MOIRA

Cayla! Please do not use the C-bomb at our table.
Close your ears, Danny.

CAYLA

I'm just quoting.

ELLA

You're such a weirdo. I honestly think you must be adopted.

CAYLA

One can hope.

MOIRA

If people are mean to you then just try and ignore them Cayla.

ELLA

I never had any problems at school.

CAYLA

Sluts are usually quite popular.

ELLA

God, you really are a C-bomb.

MOIRA

Girls! Let's not argue before your Father gets home.

DANNY

What's a C-bomb?

The door opens and their father, Richmond, walks in.

CAYLA

You're looking at one.

LATER

Richmond is on his phone as Moira serves the food.

RICHMOND

(into phone)

Yeah I know Andrew but that's not gonna be enough. I don't care-

(to Moira)

Pasta again?

(into phone)

I'll call you back.

MOIRA

It was going off today.

RICHMOND

It's pasta, it doesn't go off.

MOIRA

The sauce does. The label says-

RICHMOND

I don't care what the label says. They've proved sell by date's are just a con.

ELLA

Yeah you can eat yoghurt for like a month without it doing you any harm, I saw it in a documentary, they're filled with pesticides.

CAYLA

Preservatives.

ELLA

Know it all.

DANNY

What's a sell by date Dad?

RICHMOND

A marketing scam.

MOIRA

I don't think they're a scam.

RICHMOND

And how would you know that?

(no answer)

You know, I don't ask for much, I just want to come home for some nice food after a long day of work and this is what I get.

MOIRA

I have a migraine. I'm going to get some water.

She gets up.

ELLA

Does this sauce have dairy in it? Because I'm going lactose free at the minute.

RICHMOND

If you're in this house you'll bloody eat dairy -- I'm not having almond milk in my cereal.

CAYLA

I'm going to my room.

RICHMOND

No you're not. You'll stay here and listen to us argue, together, like a family.

Cayla sighs.

INT. CAYLA'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Small bedroom. Cayla's terrapin (LEE) is in the tank by the window, eating lettuce. Cayla is lying in bed, reading. She gets off her bed and goes over to her mirror.

She scrutinises herself in the mirror. She pulls up her shirt a little to look at her stomach. She breathes in. Sighs.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- MORNING

Cayla walks down the hallway, keeping her head down. A TEENAGE BOY (15) grabs her ass as she walks past.

TEENAGE BOY

Now you're pregnant.

He high fives a friend.

CAYLA

That's not how it works.

TEENAGE BOY

How would you know, lesbo?

INT. CLASSROOM- NOON

Cayla eats her lunch, looking depressed. Trevor walks in.

CAYLA

Get out. Seriously, leave me alone.

He goes to leave then turns back.

TREVOR

Don't let them get to you Cayla.

CAYLA

I just don't understand. Why wouldn't they at least go for you? You can't even run away.

TREVOR

(a beat and then)

Sometimes my leg gets a bit worse when bullies are around.

Cayla understands.

TREVOR

Do you wanna-

CAYLA

Please, just go Trevor.

INT. LIBRARY- AFTERNOON

As Cayla leaves the library the alarm goes off. The LIBRARIAN approaches her.

CAYLA
But I didn't get anything?

Cayla opens her bag and sees a book 'How To Lose Weight'. She sees Aimee and Fiona. They are pointing and laughing at her.

CAYLA
(to Librarian)
I didn't put that there.

Cayla hands the book back. She turns and sees Saoirse has seen this exchange. Cayla storms out, clearly embarrassed.

EXT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Cayla walks out of the library and bumps into Aimee and Fiona and a few of their cronies. They block her path.

AIMEE
Stealing books from the library?

FIONA
You must really be desperate to lose weight.

She and her friends share a laugh.

CAYLA
I just want to go home.

AIMEE
Not until you tell us why you're such a mess. Do you not have mirrors at your house? Or do you just sit around eating chocolate?

AIMEE
Yeah, why are you so fat?

CAYLA
(blurts out)
...Because I have fucking cancer.

AIMEE
What..?

CAYLA
I have stomach cancer, yeah -- Now get out my way.

FIONA

T.M.I. God.

They let her go. But all look slightly worried. A few of the pupils around have heard this exchange.

INT. CAYLA'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Cayla is trying to read but she can hear her parents arguing.

MOIRA (O.S.)

Ella will get a job in the autumn.

RICHMOND (O.S.)

We can't afford to let her coast along until then. She needs one now

MOIRA (O.S.)

Please don't raise your voice.

RICHMOND (O.S.)

I don't care if they hear us, I'm sick of everyone getting a free ride in this family -- you're too easy on them all.

MOIRA (O.S.)

I am not easy on them.

RICHMOND (O.S.)

Danny's still wetting the bed.

MOIRA (O.S.)

He's only ten Richmond.

RICHMOND (O.S.)

When I was ten I was a paper boy. By fourteen I had two jobs.

MOIRA (O.S.)

He's just a sensitive child. He has a lot of nightmares.

RICHMOND (O.S.)

If he turns out to be a homosexual I'll hold you to blame, you mother him too much.

INT. HALLWAY- NIGHT

Cayla walks across the creaky hallway. Danny is sat at the top of the stairs.

DANNY

Are Mum and Dad gonna get
divorced?

CAYLA

I know you can say it properly.

DANNY

Are Mum and Dad gonna split up?

CAYLA

If they do then it'll be your
fault.

DANNY

I hate you.

CAYLA

Join the club.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- MORNING

Cayla is aware that people are staring at her as she walks
down the hallway, more so than usual.

TEENAGER ONE

Is it true about her?

TEENAGER TWO

I heard she's gonna be dead within
the week.

TEENAGER THREE

I heard she could drop dead any
second.

INT. CHANGING ROOMS- MORNING

Cayla walks through the changing room. Aimee and Fiona see
her but they look away. They don't even insult her as she
walks past.

Ms. Williams walks into the room.

MS. WILLIAMS

Chop chop let's go girls.

CAYLA

Look, I brought my kit today but
I'm not feeling very-

MS. WILLIAMS

Oh that's okay Cayla, don't worry
about it.

Cayla is stunned.

CAYLA

Oh right, okay. So should I just-

MS. WILLIAMS

Oh whatever you want to do. Catch up on some work in here if you like

Ms. Williams touches Cayla's shoulder.

MS. WILLIAMS

I'll come and check on you in a bit

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- AFTERNOON

Trevor limps up and hugs Cayla as she walks down the hallway.

TREVOR

Cayla, I just heard the news.

CAYLA

What news?

TREVOR

Why didn't you tell me?

CAYLA

Tell you what?

MR. IQBAL (O.S.)

Cayla, can I have word?

Mr. Iqbal is stood outside his office.

CAYLA

(to Trevor)

I should go.

TREVOR

I'll be thinking about you.

Trevor hugs her again. Tightly.

CAYLA

Did you just sniff my hair?

TREVOR

...No.

INT. STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE- CONTINUOUS

Cayla walks into the office.

MR. IQBAL
Cayla, hi, here let me help you.

He goes to help her sit down.

CAYLA
I can sit on my own.

MR. IQBAL
Of course you can. You can do
anything you want.

CAYLA
Right.

MR. IQBAL
Now, I know I only saw you the
other day -- you'll be getting sick
of me soon, won't you?

Silence. He was expecting Cayla to protest that statement.

MR. IQBAL
Anyway, I just wanted you to know
that I am here for you.

CAYLA
Okay.

MR. IQBAL
As you're probably aware lots of
people know about your...condition
so if you ever feel-

CAYLA
My condition. You mean-

MR. IQBAL
The cancer yes.

CAYLA
The cancer? Oh no about that. You
see I don't actually-

MR. IQBAL
It all makes sense now, the acting
out, the drawings, your...attitude.

CAYLA
It does?

MR. IQBAL

Look, if any of this becomes too much for you, just leave your class and come here. Any time you want.

CAYLA

Any time?

MR. IQBAL

Of course.

CAYLA

So if I'm not feeling up for P.E...

MR. IQBAL

Exactly.

(beat)

Oh. I have a pamphlet you might want to read.

It reads: 'Look on the bright side. You could already be dead'.

MR. IQBAL

And if you'd like me to talk to your parents about your-

CAYLA

(quickly)

Oh no uh...they've got enough on their plates at the minute.

MR. IQBAL

Of course. Well my doors open anytime, unless there's another pupil in here... And then I'll just kick 'em out for you.

(smiles)

Just kidding...but not really... I probably would kick them out... Who knows?

INT. CLASSROOM- AFTERNOON

Ms. Williams is talking to the class. A silence fills the classroom as Cayla walks in.

Everyone is looking at her.

MS. WILLIAMS

Okay as I was saying...

Cayla sits down, wishing the floor would swallow her up.

LATER

Everyone is leaving the classroom. Cayla waits behind, putting her books in her rucksack.

She looks up. Saoirse sits down next to her.

SAOIRSE

God I bet people are driving you mad at the minute. Coming up and bothering you about your... And now I'm doing it so I'm one of them...

CAYLA

No, I mean, you're not bothering me. I don't want people feeling sorry for me.

SAOIRSE

Well I promise I won't give you grapes or flowers or whatever -- or do people give flowers because I guess that's what they give when someone's dead? -- And yes now I'm aware I've just mentioned death, twice, and you're prob'ly thinking I'm insane.

CAYLA

(smiles)

No, it's fine.

SAOIRSE

Good. You know if it was me I wouldn't even get out of bed let alone come to school so you're really -- I'm waffling.

CAYLA

I like to get out of the house.

SAOIRSE

Of course, yes. Wouldn't want to be stuck in the house with your...thoughts...

(beat)

Look, I have to go now but maybe we can get lunch tomorrow? Talk some more?

CAYLA

Okay.

SAOIRSE

Okay? I'll actually let you talk then instead of just talking at you.

CAYLA

Sounds good.

SAOIRSE

Good? Okay great. Cool.

Saoirse walks off. We hold on Cayla. She can't help but smile

INT. CITY BUS- AFTERNOON

Cayla riding the bus, reading a book. She looks out of the window and sees they are driving past the hospital.

She pushes the stop sign and gets up.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY- AFTERNOON

Cayla is walking toward a set of doors. A sign above them reads 'CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY WARD'. The doors are locked.

Cayla tries to force them open.

MALE NURSE

Excuse me, please don't do that.

CAYLA

(feigns sadness)

I'm looking for my sister.

MALE NURSE

What's her name?

CAYLA

It's uh well...

MALE NURSE

You don't know your own sister's name?

CAYLA

How about we forget the name and I won't tell anyone you exposed yourself to me.

The Male Nurse quickly keys in a code and opens the doors for Cayla.

INT. CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY WARD- LATE AFTERNOON

Cayla walks through the ward.

She sees a young girl (shaved head) with a drip attached to her arm.

Another child is asleep with his mother watching over him.

ON CAYLA

Watching them. Taking it all in.

Cayla sits down on a bench in the hallway. Composes herself.

A NURSE walks up to her.

NURSE

Can I help you?

CAYLA

(depressed)

I don't think anyone can help me now.

NURSE

You can't think like that.

CAYLA

No, that's not what I -- Thanks but no.

Cayla gets up and leaves.

INT. CAYLA'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Cayla stares at Lee (terrapien) in his tank.

CAYLA

Why can't my life be as simple as yours Lee?

Lee just stares back. Unmoving. Indifferent. Could be dead.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA- NOON

Cayla walks into the cafeteria. Heads turn as she walks through. Mutterings like 'there she is' and 'can I catch it?'

Saoirse joins Cayla in the lunch queue.

SAOIRSE

I rate this's the first time I've seen you in here.

CAYLA

Yeah I don't really like coming in here.

SAOIRSE

This place is pretty grim. I once saw a boy throw up then go back to eating his lunch.
Y'wanna go outside?

Aimee and Fiona, on the other side of the cafeteria, are watching Saoirse and Cayla.

AIMEE

All she ever talks about is her cancer. So selfish.

FIONA

Tell me about it. It's like she knows we can't say anything about it so she just rubs it in our faces.

EXT. SCHOOL- TABLE- NOON

Cayla and Saoirse are eating lunch. Saoirse notices Cayla's book.

SAOIRSE

You're always reading. I like that. I never seem to have the time. I blame Netflix.

CAYLA

My Dad won't pay for Netflix. He doesn't approve of it. 'If you can't hold a film in your hand it's not real'.

SAOIRSE

He sounds like a dick.

They laugh.

SAOIRSE

Sorry, didn't mean to call your dad a dick, I'm sure he's nice.

CAYLA

He's not.

SAOIRSE
So what y'reading?

CAYLA
Oh. It's an essay - 'The Myth of Sisyphus' by Albert Camus.

SAOIRSE
Never heard of him.

CAYLA
He's French, was French. He was a philosopher, sort of. He's dead now

SAOIRSE
What's the essay about?

CAYLA
It's about this guy Sisyphus, and he keeps having to push a rock up a hill, over and over again, for all of eternity.

SAOIRSE
Why?

CAYLA
Because that's his punishment.

SAOIRSE
(smiles)
Sounds like a fun read.

A long beat.

CAYLA
Why are you talking to me?

SAOIRSE
Sorry..?

CAYLA
I mean, if you're just hanging out with me because of my...illness you don't have to-

SAOIRSE
What? Don't be silly.
(beat)
What y'doing after school?

EXT. ALEXANDRA PARK- AFTERNOON

Sunny afternoon. Cayla and Saoirse are lying on the grass looking up at the clouds.

SAOIRSE
That one looks like a pig.

CAYLA
I'd say more like a dog.

SAOIRSE
Well that's one fat dog then.

Saoirse's on and off boyfriend, NICK (16, long hair) comes over. He speaks in a slow stoned sort of way.

NICK
Ladies.

The girls sit up.

SAOIRSE
(sighs)
This's Nick.
Nick, this is Cayla.

NICK
Oh right this's the girl you were talking about...

CAYLA
The one with cancer, yeah.

NICK
No, the smart one.

SAOIRSE
Nick's in lower sixth.

CAYLA
You go to my school?

NICK
Uh yeah but not that often, I take mental health days a lot.

CAYLA
Oh I didn't realise you had-

SAOIRSE
It's just what he calls it when he doesn't want to go to school.

NICK

Yeah I just tell my Mum, I'm not going in today 'mental health day' - she understands.

CAYLA

Wow. My Mum would never let me miss school.

Nick takes a spliff out from behind his ear.

NICK

You want some?

CAYLA

I'm okay.

SAOIRSE

Quit trying to get my friend stoned Nick.

(to Cayla)

Sorry about him, that stuff's rotted his brain.

NICK

(smiles)

No damage done yet.

SAOIRSE

You're lighting the wrong end of the spliff.

Nick turns the spliff around.

NICK

...So what are you ladies doing this fine afternoon?

SAOIRSE

Do you say ladies so you won't get my name wrong?

NICK

Woah. I'm sensing some hostility there *Saoirse*.

SAOIRSE

We have to go now.

EXT. EDGE OF ALEXANDRA PARK- EVENING

Cayla and Saoirse walk out of the park.

CAYLA
So are you and Nick...

SAOIRSE
Sort of. I don't know. It's just --
You're not interested.

CAYLA
No, it's okay.

SAOIRSE
I was ill last weekend, so I didn't
go out. But Nick told me he was
just gonna stay in and 'chill'.
But I saw on Twitter that he went
to this party.
(beat)
And I mean, it's not that he went
to the party that bothers me --
it's that he lied about it, y'know?

CAYLA
(feeling guilty)
Right.

SAOIRSE
Sorry, here's me talking about my
stupid problems and you've got
things like losing your hair and
chemo to worry about...

INT. CAYLA'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Cayla is staring at her face in the mirror. We see she has a pair of scissors in her hand.

She raises the scissors toward her face and then up to her hair.

She goes to cut her hair but stops, breathes. She can't do it.

LATER

Darkness. Cayla is lying in bed.

She hears a noise. Turns and sees a figure looming above her.

ELLA
I want the red one.

Cayla jumps a little.

CAYLA
What the fu..?

Cayla turns a light on. Ella is obviously sleep-walking.
Cayla sighs and gets out of bed.

CAYLA
Go back to bed Ella.

Ella just stands there.

Cayla tries to push Ella back toward her bedroom but Ella wakes up and shrieks.

ELLA
Stranger danger!

CAYLA
Shh! Shut up, Ella.

ELLA
(confused)
Cayla? I thought you were a zombie.

CAYLA
Go back to bed.

Ella trudges back to bed, still half-asleep.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

Cayla goes down the stairs and into the kitchen.
She pours herself a glass of water. She can hear talking O.S.

INT. LOUNGE- NIGHT

Richmond is on the sofa, with a duvet, speaking on the phone.

RICHMOND
David, you can't be serious?
Because I can't. I'm up to my neck
in this, I can't just back out now.

Richmond sees Cayla walk into the room.

RICHMOND
(into phone)
Just give me a -- I'll call back.

A long beat where no one says anything.

RICHMOND
 (re: sleeping on sofa)
 Your Mother snores.

Cayla just looks at him and then walks off.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- MORNING

Cayla walks down the hallway with Saoirse.

Cayla sees Nick and he smiles at her as he walks past.

More people nod and say hello to her and Saoirse. Cayla is enjoying this.

TEENAGE BOY
 Cayla.

Cayla turns around. It's the Teenage Boy who harassed her the other day.

CAYLA
 (defensive)
 What?

TEENAGE BOY
 I just wanted to see how you're doing.

CAYLA
 Oh right, yeah, I'm fine.

From a nearby classroom Trevor watches Saoirse and Cayla together. He looks down.

INT. STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE- AFTERNOON

Mr. Iqbal beams a smile at Cayla.

MR. IQBAL
 Cayla. Back again so soon? I'm starting to think you're enjoying these sessions.
 (he chuckles)

CAYLA
 You asked me in here.

MR. IQBAL
 Yes...
 (clears throat)
 I have some news. Good news I think

CAYLA

Okay.

MR. IQBAL

Next Friday we're having a little fundraiser to raise money for Cancer Research UK.

CAYLA

What?

MR. IQBAL

It's gonna be great, we're gonna have a sort of impromptu talent show. Yours truly may do some of his famous magic tricks, if someone forces my arm.

(laughs)

Now I don't want to put you in the spotlight or anything because I know that's not what you want. But it would be great if you'd just come on stage, you don't have to do anything, but people in this school have really taken your struggle to heart.

CAYLA

No I can't. This isn't right. I don't deserve any of this.

MR. IQBAL

Your modesty is exactly why you're deserving of it. You are an inspiration to me.

Cayla looks guilty.

MR. IQBAL

Oh and I've invited your parents.

CAYLA

What?!

MR. IQBAL

I left a message on your home phone. Hopefully they can come.

INT. RAY HOUSEHOLD- ELLA'S BEDROOM- AFTERNOON

Ella, who clearly hasn't left her bed today, is watching TV.

VOICE ON TV
A full grown pig can orgasm for up
to thirty minutes at a time.

Ella shoves crisps into her mouth. Her phone rings.

ELLA
(grunts into phone)
Yuh?

CAYLA (V.O.)
Ella, are you home?

INT. CITY BUS- SAME

Cayla on the phone to Ella.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ELLA AND CAYLA.

ELLA
I'm busy, what's up?

CAYLA
You're busy? Please don't insult me

ELLA
Did you know that pigs can
communicate with each other through
distinct grunts, oinks and squeals?

CAYLA
Uh no that's really...
Look, is Mum in?

ELLA
(shouts v.loudly)
MUM...
(no reply)
Nope.

CAYLA
Great. I need a favour.

ELLA
How much?

CAYLA
What?

ELLA
How much you gonna pay me?

CAYLA
I don't have any money.

ELLA
I'm hanging up now.

CAYLA
I'll tidy your room, for a month.

ELLA
Even under my bed?

We see a pile of food wrappers and tissues under Ella's bed.

CAYLA
(shudders)
Fine, whatever, just go downstairs
and delete the voice mail before
Mum gets home.

ELLA
Okay, just let me watch the end of-

CAYLA
Now!

INT. KITCHEN- AFTERNOON

Ella goes into the kitchen but hears the front door open.

MOIRA (O.S.)
Ella? You home?

ELLA
Uh yeah.

Moira walks into the kitchen. Ella stands (a bit too deliberately) in front of the phone.

MOIRA
Everything okay?

ELLA
All is good.

MOIRA
Okay...

Moira begins unpacking a shopping bag.

ELLA
Mum. Can you just come up to my
room? I need to show you something.

INT. RAY HOUSEHOLD- FRONT DOOR- AFTERNOON

Cayla enters the house.

She sees Ella walking down the stairs with her Mother.

MOIRA

I don't see why we had to go up to your room for you to show me your splinter?

Ella sees Cayla.

ELLA

Oh I forgot, I need to show you -- Can we just go back up to my room?

MOIRA

If we must.

Cayla heads toward the kitchen.

Moira suddenly stops halfway up the stairs.

MOIRA

Oh Cayla.

CAYLA

...Yes?

MOIRA

There was a message from school.

Cayla freezes.

MOIRA

Something about a fundraiser?

INT. DINING ROOM/LOUNGE- EVENING

The Ray family are seated at the table. Moira is preparing the food.

RICHMOND

Tsch, fundraiser. School wants to line their pockets with our hard earned money again.

MOIRA

(to Cayla)

The message wasn't very clear, but is it right that you helped organise this?

CAYLA

Uhm something like that.

RICHMOND

(apathetic)

Oh what a shame I can't be there then.

MOIRA

You don't know when it is.

RICHMOND

...Well whenever it is I know I'll be busy.

CAYLA

Forget it, you don't have to come.

RICHMOND

There, Cayla doesn't want us to go.

MOIRA

We should try and make the effort.

RICHMOND

Well you go but some of us have things to do with our days.

ELLA

Yeah I have a ton of documentaries to get through.

RICHMOND

Any of these documentaries teach you how to get a job?

ELLA

Not exactly.

RICHMOND

Then shut up.

(shakes head)

I don't know what it is with you kids. I had three jobs when I was a teenager. I packed sand into bags every night after school -- I cut my hands up doing that crap.

MOIRA

I don't think we want them cutting their hands up Richmond.

RICHMOND

What do they teach you at school? How to be lazy -- to fundraise for others? How about making money for yourselves first?

Moira serves food onto Richmond's plate.

RICHMOND

And how about something other than
pasta for once?

Moira seethes.

INT. CLASSROOM- MORNING

The class is ending, Cayla is packing her stuff up.

Trevor approaches her.

TREVOR

I've written something for you.

CAYLA

You have?

TREVOR

Yes, a poem.

CAYLA

Uh well now's not a good-

TREVOR

(reading)

Sometimes I feel so happy.
Sometimes I feel so sad.
Sometimes I feel so happy.
But mostly you just make me mad.
Cayla, you just make me mad.
Linger on...your pale blue eyes.

CAYLA

Isn't that a song?

TREVOR

Well it's how I feel about you.

CAYLA

I have green eyes.

TREVOR

Greeny blue.

CAYLA

Thanks, it's a nice gesture.

TREVOR

I don't know what I'd do if you
died.

CAYLA

Well that's not gonna-

TREVOR

It's kept me up nights. Just thinking of your body decomposing in the ground.

CAYLA

I don't think you need to be so specific.

TREVOR

Your beautiful face melting away. Worms eating your body...

CAYLA

Okay, well as fun as this has been Trevor, I have a class.

TREVOR

I could do the poem at the talent show if you'd like?

CAYLA

I couldn't think of anything worse.

Cayla walks toward the door.

TREVOR

(calls after her)

Don't forget who your real friends are Cayla.

CAYLA

We were never friends Trevor...

Cayla stops. She knows she went too far.

INT. CAFETERIA- NOON

Cayla is queuing to get food. She sees a poster on the wall:

'Cancer Research fundraiser this friday.'

Cayla leaves the food queue. She's lost her appetite.

INT. STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE- AFTERNOON

Cayla opposite Mr. Iqbal.

MR. IQBAL

What can I do for you Cayla?

CAYLA
There's something I need to tell
you.

MR. IQBAL
And there's something I need to
tell you.

CAYLA
There is?

MR. IQBAL
We have already raised over two
thousand pounds for cancer
research, just by selling tickets
to Friday's show.

CAYLA
Oh wow, that's really...

MR. IQBAL
And it's all down to you.

A long silence.

CAYLA
I have to go.

MR. IQBAL
But what did you want to say?

CAYLA
Nothing, it doesn't matter.

MR. IQBAL
Oh no. Have I done that thing
whereby me telling you my news has
negatively impacted you and as such
you can't tell me the news you were
planning to tell me?

CAYLA
No. Bye.

INT. CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY WARD- LATE AFTERNOON

Cayla walks up the reception desk.

NURSE
Hi, how can I help you?

CAYLA
Uhm well...I'd like to volunteer
please.

INT. RAY HOUSEHOLD- FRONT DOOR- EVENING

Cayla walks into the house. As she does she hears a door slamming upstairs.

UP THE STAIRS

Cayla makes her way upstairs.

Her Father is stood in the hallway trying to open the door to his bedroom.

He turns and sees Cayla.

RICHMOND

Bloody door's jammed again.

Cayla walks toward her own bedroom.

RICHMOND

Cayla, are you busy?

CAYLA

Yes.

RICHMOND

Good. I need your help.

CAYLA

But I just-

Richmond walks over to her.

RICHMOND

Your Mother's being ridiculous, she's locked herself in her room. Says she's never cooking dinner again.

CAYLA

I thought the door was jammed?

RICHMOND

She won't listen to me. I need you to talk to her. Please, I don't even know how to work the oven.

(off her look)

And I don't want your Mother to be upset.

CAYLA

Why aren't you asking Ella or Danny?

RICHMOND

Those fools? You're the best of a bad bunch and I mean that in the nicest possible way.

CAYLA

Even when you're being nice you're an idiot.

RICHMOND

So you'll speak to her?

INT. RAY HOUSEHOLD- PARENTS BEDROOM

Moira is sitting by her dresser listening to a CD.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(American)

Now say it with me: I am a strong independent woman.

MOIRA

I am a strong independent woman.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I will take shit from no one.

MOIRA

I will take sh... from no one.

WOMAN'S VOICE

You better not have just wimped out of saying shit.

(beat)

It's time to take control of your life.

MOIRA

Yes. Yes.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Say: I am not ashamed to be me.

MOIRA

I am not ashamed to be me.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I am not embarrassed to say this out loud.

MOIRA

I am not embarrassed to say this out loud!

CAYLA (O.S.)
Mum, who are you talking to?

MOIRA
(quickly)
No one.

WOMAN'S VOICE
And I am not ashamed to buy more of
these CDs...

Moira turns off the CD player.

MOIRA
What do you want Cayla? The
kitchen's closed for the night.
Have some beans.

CAYLA (O.S.)
No it's not that, it's...
It's kind of hard to talk to you
from out here.

LATER

Cayla is standing across from her Mother.

CAYLA
Dad asked me to come and speak to
you.

MOIRA
I am never making dinner for that
man again.
(beat)
He used to love my spicy pasta and
now he can't stand it -- well it's
the way I feel about him.

CAYLA
Look, I know Dad's an idiot, but
you married him, and he's hopeless
without you. He wanted me to tell
you how sorry he is.

MOIRA
Why didn't he tell me himself?

CAYLA
He said you won't speak to him.

MOIRA
Well he should have tried harder.

Silence.

CAYLA

Dad just says things how they are,
he doesn't know the meaning of the
word tact.

MOIRA

There's being honest then there's
being...

CAYLA

An asshole?

MOIRA

Don't use that language Cayla.
But yes.

She smiles. Cayla sits on the bed next to her.

MOIRA

What's going on with you at the
minute? Where've you been going
after school?

CAYLA

I've been with a friend -- Saoirse.

MOIRA

I'll have to meet her some time.
I knew things would work out at
school.

CAYLA

I don't know if things have worked
out.

MOIRA

Oh no?

CAYLA

I think I've really messed up.
(to herself)
I can't believe getting cancer
would actually improve my
situation.

MOIRA

What?

CAYLA

Nothing...

(beat)

(MORE)

CAYLA (CONT'D)

There's something I need to do, but doing it is going to be so hard, it'll probably mean going back to being friendless and alone.

MOIRA

Why do you think that?

CAYLA

People actually like me now. And they didn't before I did this...thing.

MOIRA

They will like you anyway.

CAYLA

No they won't.

MOIRA

Cayla, a friend is a friend, they don't just abandon you if you make a mistake and if they do then they're not a real friend.

CAYLA

I guess...

RICHMOND (O.S.)

Looks like you guys are having a good chat.

Richmond has walked into the room.

MOIRA

Yes and we don't want to be interrupted.

CAYLA

I've got homework to do. I'll leave you guys to it.

Cayla leaves.

MOIRA

What's wrong? Need someone to cook your dinner for you?

RICHMOND

Oh no I've already eaten. And I made some food for the kids.

MOIRA
 (smiles)
 Eggs?

Richmond walks over to Moira.

RICHMOND
 The very best scrambled eggs. I can
 whip you up a batch if you'd like?

MOIRA
 I'm not hungry.

RICHMOND
 Fair enough.
 (beat)
 So what you been doing in here?

MOIRA
 Getting some peace and quiet.

RICHMOND
 Look, how can I make this right?

Moira considers this.

MOIRA
 Well, there is something...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- AFTERNOON

Busy hallway. Everyone is heading toward the auditorium.

MS. WILLIAMS
 Come on, show starts in ten
 minutes.

EXT. SCHOOL- CONTINUOUS

Cayla is sat outside on a bench.

Pupils are walking past her into school.

Cayla looks like she is gearing herself up. She breathes
 deeply and stands up. Follows the crowd.

Before she gets inside though she sees a car pulling into the
 car park.

It's her family. Her face drops.

CAYLA
 Oh no...no...

INT. SCHOOL- TOILETS- DAY

Cayla paces around the toilets, anxious.

She goes into a cubicle. Throws up into the toilet.

She sits hunched over the toilet, breathing heavily.

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh no, is that from the chemo?

Cayla turns and sees a Skinny Teenage Girl staring at her.

SKINNY GIRL

Hashtag heartbreaking.

The girl snaps a photo.

CAYLA

Go away.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM- LATE AFTERNOON

Cayla (looking nervous) takes a seat on the front row.

Mr. Iqbal is on the stage doing a magic trick for the uninterested crowd. He throws a card into the air but fails to catch it.

RICHMOND

Who does this guy think he is?

Richmond, seated with the rest of the family, looks bored.

Mr. Iqbal finishes his trick. The crowd politely applauds.

MR. IQBAL

(on stage)

We have raised over three thousand pounds today. An incredible figure.

Cayla looks back and sees her Mother. Moira smiles at Cayla, gives her a thumbs up.

MR. IQBAL

And all this is down to one brave girl who has-

CAYLA

Wait. I need to say something.

Cayla gets up onto the stage.

MR. IQBAL

Of course. Let's give a round of
applause for Cayla. An inspiration
to us all.

CAYLA

(to Mr. Iqbal)

Please. Don't say that.

Cayla looks out at the crowd. There are a lot of people out
there.

She sees her family, Saoirse, Nick, Aimee, Fiona and Trevor.
She gulps.

AIMEE

(to Fiona)

Probably milking the whole cancer
thing again. Pathetic.

Back with Cayla, on stage.

CAYLA

Hi everyone...

Uhm...well, I just wanted to say...

(long pause)

I don't have cancer.

NICK

Alright, she's cured!

A lot of confused faces in the crowd, not least Cayla's
family.

CAYLA

No. I never had cancer.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

What...

But I thought she...

RICHMOND

What's going on? Is this a play or
something?

MOIRA

(dawns on her)

This is the thing. This is what she
didn't want to do.

RICHMOND

What the hell're you talking about?

Back on Cayla.

CAYLA
 ...I made it up. I'm not ill and I
 just...lied.

The crowd are growing restless. Confused faces. People
 talking amongst themselves.

AIMEE
 (calls out)
 Freak.

RICHMOND
 Who said that? What little
 shithouse said that?

Richmond stands up and surveys the crowd.

Back on stage with Cayla.

CAYLA
 I'm sorry if I upset anyone. I
 never meant to, things just got out
 of hand...
 (beat)
 But I'm really grateful to everyone
 who donated as I know there will be
 people in here who have been
 affected by cancer.

Absolute silence.

RICHMOND
 Someone must have bloody cancer in
 here...

Cayla sees Saoirse in the crowd, looking shocked.

CAYLA
 I'm very sorry...

She hurries off the stage.

MR. IQBAL
 Okay uhm that was a bit of a turn-
 up for the books but I want to say
 thank you for all your donations
 and assure you they will all be
 going to Cancer Research UK.
 I'll make sure of it.

INT. RICHMOND'S CAR- EVENING

Richmond, Moira, Ella and Danny are all seated, waiting.

Cayla gets in the car. The Ford KA is only a four seater so they are all crammed in.

The tension is palpable. No one speaks for what seems an age.

DANNY

I don't understand. Does Cayla have cancer or not?

MOIRA

No she doesn't dear, she was lying.

ELLA

I saw this documentary about this woman who couldn't stop lying. She turned out to be a serial killer.

DANNY

Is Cayla going to be a serial killer?

MOIRA

No dear, of course not...

ELLA

Well we probably wouldn't know even if she was one.

CAYLA

Look everyone, I'm sorry, really. I let this family down.

RICHMOND

Damn right you did.

(beat)

But that was pretty brave back there Cayla. It took guts to tell the truth.

CAYLA

Does that mean you're not going to punish me?

RICHMOND

Oh no. You're in deep trouble. Deep deep trouble.

DANNY

I'm glad you don't have cancer Cayla.

CAYLA

Thanks Danny.

MOIRA

I can't get over how much money you raised.

RICHMOND

Yeah. It's more than Ella will earn in her lifetime.

They all laugh.

RICHMOND

Come on, let's go get some food.

He starts the engine.

CAYLA

Fancy some pasta Dad?

RICHMOND

Watch it.

They all laugh again. Then the engine cuts out.

Richmond's smile fades. He tries again but the car won't start.

INT. SCHOOL- MORNING

Cayla is aware that everyone is looking at her as she walks into the school.

She tries to ignore their stares and their cruel words.

INT. CLASSROOM- NOON

Cayla eating her lunch alone. Back to the way things were.

The door opens and Trevor walks in.

He walks over and sits next to Cayla, unpacks his food.

They don't say anything. They just sit and eat.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- AFTERNOON

Cayla is confronted by Aimee and Fiona.

AIMEE

Here she is, the faker.

FIONA

I hope you actually get cancer now.

Aimee pushes Cayla, hard.

AIMEE

That's for my aunt, she had cancer.

Now Fiona pushes Cayla.

FIONA

That's for my cat, she died of something that was probably cancer.

GIRL'S VOICE

Hey, leave her alone.

Cayla turns and sees Saoirse walking up to them.

AIMEE

Saoirse, why are you siding with the freak?

SAOIRSE

If she's a freak then I'm a freak too.

Cayla smiles.

AIMEE

(to Saoirse)

You've made a bad decision today.

(to Cayla)

We'll see you around. Very soon.

They walk off.

SAOIRSE

Y'alright?

CAYLA

I've been worse.

A long pause.

CAYLA

Sorry about...everything.

SAOIRSE

I read that essay.

CAYLA

The Myth of Sisphyus?

SAOIRSE

Yep. I had to Sparknotes it but I think I get it now.

CAYLA

You get it?

SAOIRSE

Yeah, I think I know what Camus was trying to say. We're all Sisyphus, aren't we? And pushing that rock up the hill is like life -- like school.

CAYLA

Yeah. I guess it is.

Cayla smiles at Saoirse. Go out on that smile.

FADE OUT.