

KILLING TYME

(Television Pilot Script)

By

Zachary Sergi

When 18-year-old Owen's unexpected breakdown forces her to stay home while all her friends leave for college, Owen escapes her escalating family drama by joining a cultish political youth movement (named TYME) that fulfills her every need—and pulls her deep into a world she may never escape. (*The Bell Jar meets Pretty Little Liars*)

TEASER

EXT. WESTCHESTER LAKE - NIGHT

Open on a CLOSE UP of pills spilling out of a bottle and into an open palm. Then slowly PULL BACK to reveal a girl holding the handful of pills, blinking back tears.

This is OWEN SANDERS (18, type-A overachieving perfectionist with a big heart), sitting on a dock and staring at the moonlight reflecting off the anti-anxiety pills in her hand. Seeing them, Owen experiences a:

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - ONE WEEK AGO

A FEMALE PSYCHIATRIST places the same bottle of pills on the desk in front of Owen.

PSYCHIATRIST

Reentering the world can be hard at first, don't expect everything to be perfect. It will take a while to adjust, that's normal. Just be sure to ask for help before your anxiety builds up into a panic attack.

OWEN

I know. And anytime I feel like there's too much pressure, take ten deep breaths and change my surroundings.

PSYCHIATRIST

Right. Now our discharge department has set up your first three outpatient therapy sessions. You know how important these are.

Owen smiles, yes of course. She may be good at covering, but we see the smile doesn't quite reach her eyes.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WESTCHESTER LAKE - THE PRESENT

Owen pours all the pills back into the bottle except for one, the same vacant look in her eyes.

KILLING TYME

ACT ONE

INT. SANDERS HOUSE - OWEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Owen's phone alarm BUZZES and she compulsively checks her text messages, but there's nothing -- only unreturned texts from Owen to two names, BRYNN & MADISON: **Finally got my phone back. Can we please talk?**

Owen looks across her neat room, which is filled with cross country trophies and academic awards. Owen eyes them wearily: from another life. Her gaze then rests on a photo of Owen with her three BEST FRIENDS, which causes another:

FLASHBACK - INT. CAR - NIGHT - THREE MONTHS AGO

OWEN drives while JULIE (18, best-friend material) rides shotgun. In the backseat, MADISON & BRYNN dance around to pop music. Everyone is in a party mood.

MADISON

Owen, where do you find these songs?

BRYNN

Please, you know she spent an hour making a playlist, like always.

Once again Owen seems a bit disconnected, but as usual, she covers it well.

OWEN

Because tonight is special! Back me up, Julie.

JULIE

It's our last party together, it deserves one of Owen's most epic playlists. I have no idea what college parties are going to be like, but they won't be the same.

BRYNN

Please, they're going to be exactly the same, just with the volume turned up to ten.

MADISON

Speaking of volume, can you turn the music up, Owen?

Owen nods and reaches for the dial, but it's clear: hearing Brynn, something has snapped in her. As Owen turns the dial, emotion wells on her face.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Okay, that's loud enough.

Owen still turns the dial, until Julie puts her hand out to stop her.

JULIE
(shouting over music)
Owen, what --

But Julie sees the panic on Owen's face -- something is very wrong. Owen looks completely overwhelmed.

OWEN
I... I can't... I can't...

Owen fights to catch her breath, but the girls in the backseat can't see what's going on.

BRYNN
Earth to Owen? Are you--

MADISON
Hey, Owen, we're drifting into--

JULIE
Owen, oh my god!

Owen turns back to the wheel to find two lights drowning out the windshield... Two headlights. Oncoming headlights.

Everything then SMASHES TO BLACK as we hear SCREECHING metal.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SANDERS HOUSE - OWEN'S BEDROOM - PRESENT

The screeching turns into KNOCKING as Owen snaps back to find her mom, MOLLY SANDERS (40s, high-strung, lawyer chic) at her door. Owen fights to hide the emotion on her face.

MOLLY SANDERS
Owen, are you okay? You look --

OWEN
(forcing a smile)
I'm fine. Just a weird dream.

MOLLY SANDERS

Oh, okay. Well breakfast has been ready and it's getting late, maybe you should get out of bed honey?

OWEN

Sure. Be right there.

Mrs. Sanders goes, thinking her nudging is helping Owen. But as Owen's smile fades, we see it's actually suffocating her.

INT. SANDERS HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In a sunny kitchen, Owen finds her mom eating breakfast with her dad, SHANE SANDERS (40s, laid back, historian hip), and her little sister RYAN SANDERS (16, mini-Owen, sensitive), who wears a private school uniform. Owen joins them.

MOLLY SANDERS

...won't be able to take Owen to therapy, the witness meeting got moved up.

SHANE SANDERS

I guess I could run home between periods, but --

OWEN

It's fine, I can just take uber.

SHANE SANDERS

You sure? It's your first visit to this new doctor, you shouldn't have to go alone.

OWEN

It's no big deal. Besides, it'll be good to be back on a schedule.

Mr. Sanders is wary, but Mrs. Sanders is quite proud.

MOLLY SANDERS

See? With that attitude, you'll get that doctor's approval and be cleared to go to Penn in no time. Maybe even by next semester!

Owen smiles, but she looks uncomfortable at this notion. Ryan can immediately tell -- she idolizes Owen. Or, she used to. Now Ryan seems more concerned with mothering Owen.

RYAN

Owen, how's your independent study coming?

OWEN

I'm not sure my advisor will actually let it count, but I have to keep busy with something.

MOLLY SANDERS

Are you sure you're not interested in that paralegal temp job? My --

SHANE SANDERS

You know what the doctor said about not taking on too much, too soon. Let's take one step at a time.

Mrs. Sanders nods, but she clearly doesn't get it.

MOLLY SANDERS

Right, of course. Well if you need anything today call you dad, I'll have to be away from my phone for this witness meeting.

OWEN

So when are we going to get to know about your super secret case?

MOLLY SANDERS

When it's over, unfortunately.
(checks time, stands)
Which will be never, if we don't get going. Owen, would you mind cleaning up after breakfast?

Mrs. Sanders hugs Owen on her way out, then Ryan nods and waves as she follows. As they exit, Mr. Sanders hugs Owen.

SHANE SANDERS

Funny how she phrases that like a question, huh?
(then)
How is the project coming, really?

OWEN

I'm having some trouble with the grading system, but I suppose progressive schools don't just build themselves. Have you heard anything about this TYME organization, the one that bought a campus in our town?

SHANE SANDERS

Yes, and they're bad news.

OWEN

Really? I only read one article about them online, they seem pretty secretive, but it also seems like their focus on education --

SHANE SANDERS

Is straight up cultish, Owen. They've been secretive for a reason. Trust me, the less you know about TYME, the better.

(calms down, then)

However, I may have left you something on my desk that will actually help with your project.

Mr. Sanders kisses Owen's forehead, winks and turns to go.

INT. SANDERS HOUSE - MR. SANDERS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As Owen enters the old-world office, she eyes a bookshelf full of utopian literature: classics like Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451 mixed with modern dystopias like The Hunger Games and Divergent. Owen spots her present on the desk and opens it to find:

The Handmaid's Tale, by Margaret Atwood: The Folio Society Limited Edition.

Owen smiles, touching her hand to her NECKLACE: a geometric shape that matches the ladies head wrap on the cover.

Owen then sits down at the desk, which is organized with more books and papers for her project. Obviously utopian literature (and its relation to education) is a passion.

Taking out her phone, Owen turns on one of her famous playlists: **Education Nation**. While her phone is out, she also checks for texts, but there aren't any. Owen then cracks open the The Handmaid's Tale and is surprised to find a bookmark tucked inside, with a handwritten note:

For my Owen, to get you through your first night away at college. I'm too proud for words. Love, Dad.

For Owen, reading this note feels like taking a bullet. She closes the book, rattled, as tears begin to roll down her cheeks. How is this her life?

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - LOBBY - LATER

While Owen waits, she pulls out her phone and opens her text chain with BRYNN & MADISON, but there's still no response. Seeing this pulls Owen into another:

FLASHBACK - INT. SANDERS HOUSE - OWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Owen, Julie, Brynn and Madison wear the clothes from the night of the crash, getting ready beforehand. Brynn and Madison crowd in front of the mirror applying makeup, Julie straightens her hair. Owen absentmindedly paints her nails. Julie notices Owen's silence and sits next to her.

JULIE

Hey, you okay?

Owen snaps out of it. Or, she tries to.

OWEN

Yes. Just... tired.

JULIE

Tired? We've been off all summer, it's the first time we've been able to stop the sprint to college.

OWEN

I know, but it's over already, we leave tomorrow. Do you think college will be even harder? And now we won't even have each other to deal?

JULIE

Yeah right, Ms. Valedictorian Varsity Track Captain, like anything is hard for you. Besides, this is exactly why they invented Facebook, for lonely college kids to connect.

Owen smiles at this, but Julie knows her too well.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Are you nervous about seeing Hunter again? I know he dropped off the face of the planet after you broke up, but Penn is a big school. I'm sure you won't even see him.

OWEN

Oh, no. That was a year ago, Jules.
I'm over it. Really.

Julie looks over Owen, cautious.

JULIE

Then what is it? You've been kind
of... off. Like, for a while.

Owen turns to Julie, looking like she's about to answer...
but then she smiles over the moment.

OWEN

I'm fine, I'm just worrying about
nothing, as usual. But we're going
to have a blast tonight!

BRYNN

Hell yeah we are!

MADISON

We know the only way to pump the
breaks on the Owen anxious express
is to blow off a little steam!

Hearing this Owen rallies, dancing with her best friends.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - LOBBY - PRESENT

Owen STARES down at the one-sided text chain on her phone.
She decides to type: **I want to say I'm sorry.**

Owen's thumb hesitates over the SEND button, but she finally
hits it. She's about to lock her phone when she sees a
response coming from MADISON: **Owen, please stop texting. We
don't want to talk to you.** It's followed up with: **You should
go visit Julie instead. After what you did, she deserves it.**

Owen puts the phone in her bag and tries to calm down, but
suddenly her breathing becomes labored. Owen's face falls and
she tries to breathe, but it's no use.

As her anxiety worsens, Owen roots madly through her bag. The
receptionist eyes her, concerned. Owen finds her bottle of
pills and swallows one, but she can already tell it won't be
enough.

OWEN

Is the therapist available now?

RECEPTIONIST

No, I'm sorry, she's in a session.

OWEN

Okay. I'll, uh, call to reschedule.

Without waiting for a response from the worried receptionist, Owen spins, hurries out the front door... and starts running.

EXT. LAKESIDE WOODS - CROSS COUNTRY COURSE - LATER

Owen runs through a cross country trail, trying to outrun herself. She reaches the end of the course and bends over, panting. Other STUDENT RUNNERS enter the course and as they go, a couple of them point at Owen, whispering.

Trying to catch her breath, Owen stands to look at a WALL OF FAME. She looks over the faces of runners and comes to her own plaque...

Where someone has written CRAZY in red spray paint over her picture. Owen is stunned -- who would do that?

GUY

Owen Sanders? Is that you?

Owen spins to find HUNTER (20, boy next door grown up). Owen looks visibly shaken, given both unexpected sights.

HUNTER

Whoa, you look like you've seen the ghost of boyfriends past.

OWEN

Haven't I?

Hunter laughs, approaching Owen.

HUNTER

I can't tell you how good it is to see you, O.

Hunter hugs Owen and she hugs back, trying to process. She loved him, once upon a time.

OWEN

Hunter, it's good to see you, too. But...

HUNTER

Where have I been the past year?

Hunter smiles his disarming smile and it's impossible for anyone to stay mad at him. Including Owen.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

It's a really long story. One that not everyone really understands.

Hunter is about to explain, but notices the writing over Owen's picture. He frowns.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

Looks like you may have some experience with people not understanding, huh?

Hunter smiles empathetically, but Owen looks away. She definitely doesn't want to go there. Hunter gets it.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

Tell you what, we both have a lot to catch up on, but I need to run and you need to shower.

Hunter grins and Owen eases up -- he has an effect on her. Hunter then pulls out a business card clipped to his armband. It's blank, except for an address.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

This is where I'm staying. Could you meet there later?

OWEN

You're not staying with your parents?

HUNTER

Like I said, we have a lot to catch up on. See you later, O.

Hunter smiles big again before heading off. Owen watches him go, completely unnerved. But definitely... interested.

INT. SANDERS HOUSE - OWEN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Owen, now freshly showered, stares at the address. Should she go? She looks at her dormant phone and puts on shoes.

RYAN

You going somewhere?

Owen turns to find Ryan standing in her doorway.

OWEN

I think so. Just for a little bit.

RYAN

This late? Your curfew is only --

OWEN

Ryan, you don't have to --
 (catches her anger)
 I'll be fine. I just need some air,
 is all.

Ryan eyes Owen, hurt and unsure. Still, she leaves Owen to it. Owen sighs -- damn it.

EXT. FOREST - TOWN OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Owen walks along a lit path up to a gate, looking down at the address: she's at the right place. She then notices that on the gate, there's a symbol: a circle with a **Y** in the center, made to look like a tree with two branches. Where is she?

Owen walks inside the gate and finds herself in a garden-lined path. She walks along, intrigued, until she turns a corner and finds herself on the outside of a long brick wall, which is wrapped around some kind of sprawling campus. Owen is awed, but in a way that sends a chill up her spine.

HUNTER

I knew you'd come.

Owen spins to find Hunter waiting for her just outside a set of massive black gates. Owen's eyes rise to the silver letters across the gate:

The Youth Movement Everlasting: *The Young & The Fearless.*

Owen freezes, overwhelmed. Because Hunter has brought her to TYME.

END OF ACT ONE

Unlock Act Two (available now), along with all other available and future Acts at Patreon.com/zacharysergi.