PATIENT

screenplay by

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based on the graphic novel by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Autumn leaves blow across a sidewalk, which leads from the parking lot to a new medical building. And then --

VOMIT.

An indistinguishable man wipes his lips with his sleeve and wanders deeper into the lot.

A CELLULAR PHONE RINGS.

DOGAN BROWN (19), a lanky stoner with a casted left arm, skateboards from a side street, yanks his phone out of his baggy hoodie, sighs, and answers the incoming call.

DOGAN
S'up? ... yes, I'm almost there...
I'm not gonna be late --

Dogan stops short of the vomit puddle and retches.

DOGAN
-- Ugh.

His eyes follow the trail to the man a few yards away.

DOGAN
(on the phone)
I know... I know -- Mom, hold on!
(to the man)
Hey, man. You okay?

The man stops, his back to Dogan, and nearly doubles over. His hand shoots up to shoo Dogan away.

DOGAN
A'ight... it's whatever, I guess.
(on the phone)
Nothing. Just some drunk ass dying.
... I'm not dramatic, stop saying --

Dogan snatches his board, steps around the mess, and heads for the entrance.

DOGAN
(on the phone)
No, I don't take the new pills for another hour, but, I gotta go.

POLICE AND AMBULANCE SIRENS FADE UP IN THE DISTANCE.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Dogan presses the elevator button.

DOGAN
(on the phone)
I will --

The elevator door opens; he boards.

INT. 3RD FLOOR ELEVATOR LOBBY - DAY

Dogan exits the elevator.

DOGAN
(on the phone)
Yes, I know what happens if I don't take my pill! You know, stress is a big part of all the shit that's wrong with me, right?

INT. 3RD FLOOR CLINIC - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Dogan heads through the clinic entrance, into the large waiting room, and toward the receptionist's desk. A handful of patients occupy the room.

DOGAN
(on the phone)
Okay. Gotta go... okay! Later.

Dogan hangs up, pockets the phone, and spots OLIVIA (20s) sitting at the receptionist's desk. Dogan's expression softens. He pauses to take her in with all of his senses.

Dogan takes a deep breath and re-stuffs his mop of hair in his beanie. He approaches Olivia, the kind of girl who is business casual at work and punk rock on the weekends.

Olivia is consumed by a word game app on her cell phone while obnoxiously chewing gum. She blows a bubble till it pops, oblivious to Dogan.

Dogan clears his throat.

Olivia shuffles letters on her game.

DOGAN
Hey.

Olivia puts up a finger, plays a word, and taps her computer mouse to awaken her monitor.

OLIVIA
How can I help you?

DOGAN
(stuttering)
I have a five-thirty. Uh... follow-up appointment. With Doctor Glover.

Olivia scans her computer screen.

OLIVIA
First name?

DOGAN
Dogan.

OLIVIA
Alrighty. Change in insurance?

DOGAN
Insurance? What's that? I'm an Uber Driver.

OLIVIA
So, what, you've been getting by with your looks all this time?

Dogan's heart pounds in his chest. He blushes and sweats.

DOGAN
(stuttering)
Medicaid.

Dogan shrinks back, uncomfortably. Olivia's smirk fades. She hands him a clipboard full of paperwork and a pen.

OLIVIA
Right. So, just fill this out and take a seat. Someone will call you back shortly.

DOGAN
Awesome. Busy work.

OLIVIA
Just fill out the first page. Nobody really looks at the rest.

Dogan points to the bottom of the page.

DOGAN
This?

OLIVIA
Yeah. Just circle all medical conditions... like it says.

DOGAN
They're all medical conditions.

Olivia raises an unamused eyebrow.

DOGAN
... I'll get right on it.

Dogan finds his way to the middle of the room where he plops down on a large couch. His foot nervously rocks his skateboard back and forth. He examines his worksheets.

A COUGH echoes from across the room.

Dogan glances around to see a variety of people scattered about. They all look sick and miserable, some nauseated.

Dogan whips out his phone -- the display shows only forty-five percent battery remains. Dogan tries to open YouTube -- no signal.

DOGAN
Oh, come on.

He grunts in frustration, pops in his earbuds, opens a music app, and fills out his forms.

A LOUD PUNK SONG FILLS HIS EARS.

LOUISE (40s), an unseen woman GROANS HAUNTINGLY from the elevator lobby as she moves into the waiting room.

LOUISE (O.S.)
No... no...

Unseen to Dogan (and *us*), Louise limps -- with assistance from her companion, EUNICE (40s) -- and slumps down on the couch back-to-back with Dogan's -- the IMPACT startles him.

Dogan yanks out his earbuds, his ears perk up. His eyes dart from side to side at the commotion, but he doesn't turn around to see it for himself.

LOUISE (O.S.)
I told you not to bring me here.

Louise's daughter, PENNY (5), wanders around the furniture and stops in front of Dogan. She stares at him blankly and picks her nose, pig tails bobbing with every deep twist.

DOGAN
Can I help you?

Penny rolls her eyes, then explores the waiting room.

EUNICE (O.S.)
It's okay -- they'll help you. Just keep breathing, deep breaths.

Dogan watches as Eunice hurries to the receptionist desk.

EUNICE
Hello? My friend needs medical attention. It's an emergency!

Olivia rises and glances past Eunice -- and Dogan -- to the groaning Louise. Olivia's jaw drops.

OLIVIA
Okay. I can get her in for sure, but you might be better off just taking her to the hospital.

EUNICE
I tried that! The roads were blocked off. Please, just help her!

OLIVIA
I'll see what I can do.

Penny heads to the children's area in front of Dogan. She selects a "Repeating Turtle" toy, which records and distorts voices when programmed by its user.

The turtle has big bulging eyes and a mouth that gapes in what must've once been a smile, but years of abuse makes his gritted teeth look more like a crazed grimace. Penny puts the toy on via shoulder strap and grabs the dangling microphone.

PENNY
(recording)
Hi, Mister Turtle.

TURTLE TOY
(distorted, creepy)
Hi, Mister Turtle.

Penny giggles.

Louise GROANS louder, as her body writhes violently. Her chipped purple fingernails dig into the back of Dogan's couch. Her fingers are swollen.

A bead of sweat rolls down Dogan's brow.

Dogan sees the shocked and concerned faces of the patients sitting across from him as they watch from a safe distance.

DOGAN'S HEARTBEAT INTENSIFIES...

Penny hides her eyes from the turtle.

PENNY
Peek-a-boo. I see you.
(recording)
I see you.

TURTLE TOY
(distorted, creepy)
I see you.

Penny giggles.

Eunice returns to Louise with a paper cup of water.

EUNICE
Here, drink this.

The phone RINGS at the receptionist's desk.

OLIVIA
(answering phone)
River Ridge Clinic East.

The phone RINGS again.

OLIVIA
(on the phone)
He's with a patient at the --
ma'am, slow down, I can't -- hello?
... Hello?

Olivia looks at the phone, confused.

OLIVIA
(to herself)
Rude.

Olivia answers the other line. The RINGING persists.

OLIVIA
(on the phone)
River Ridge Clinic East, please
hold.

She answers the next line.

OLIVIA
(on the phone)
River Ridge Clinic East, please hold.

Dogan hears a SLURPING noise behind him, followed by coughing and a “SPITTING UP” sound. Then, a SLAP and a SPLASH.

Water drops land on the back of Dogan’s neck; he shudders and quickly wipes the droplets away.

TURTLE TOY (O.S.)
(distorted, creepy)
I see you.

Dogan picks up his cell phone and turns on the front facing camera. He cautiously raises it, attempting to get a sneaky peek at the scene behind him... slowly... *slowly*...

MARIA (O.S.)
Dogan?

Dogan jumps, nearly drops his phone, and sends his clipboard flying. He glances up to see the nurse, MARIA (30s), in scrubs with yellow duckies, standing at the secured Exam Room Lobby door with a laptop. There’s a standard clinic pen in her breast pocket and a retractable lanyard with keys and five color-coded ID and Key Cards clipped to her waistband.

MARIA
Ready?

Dogan nods. He swallows, pops out of his seat, snatches his clipboard and skateboard, and follows Maria through the door.

OLIVIA
(on the phone)
Sir? Okay -- you’re going to want to take him to the Emergency Room.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Dogan follows Maria. He looks back to the Waiting Room, but Eunice blocks his view of Louise. He hears her VOMIT and sees chunks of food and bile blast across the floor.

DOGAN
Maybe you should, like... do you think you should help her first?

MARIA
Someone will be with her shortly.

Maria leads Dogan toward an Exam Room as another nurse hurries toward the Waiting Room. Dogan glances back as they rush through the secured door -- through it, clinic personnel surround an obstructed Louise with frantic faces.

INT. DOGAN'S EXAMINATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Modern, but basic, windowless room. Bulletin board with cheesy motivational posters and medical pinups/info. Clock on the wall. Calendar. Dogan is on the examination table.

Maria releases the pressure from the sphygmomanometer attached to the cuff wrapped around Dogan's arm.

MARIA
One-fifty-one over one-oh-one. That's high. High-high. Have you tried changing your diet?

DOGAN
Nope. Still running on coffee and pizza. But not vodka anymore. Obviously.

MARIA
You need to take better care of yourself.

DOGAN
Why bother.

MARIA
So you can take care of your mother when she's old and gray.

DOGAN
That's what my kid sister's for.

A KNOCK at the door. Dogan jumps as Olivia immediately pops in. Dogan fixates on her.

OLIVIA
Hey, Maria. The waiting room is packed. They're saying the hospital's turning people away or something.

MARIA
What? That can't be right.

OLIVIA
Well, they're sure yelling at me like it is.

MARIA
Okay. Just do your best, I'll be there in a minute.

OLIVIA
Party.

Olivia closes the door behind her as she leaves.

MARIA
I want you to talk to one of our health counselors before you leave today. Okay?

DOGAN
Look, I'm fine. I'm not an addict. I'm eating, I sleep at least once a week, I'm not suicidal...

Maria raises an eyebrow -- her eyes drift to his cast.

DOGAN
... anymore.

Maria crosses her arms.

DOGAN
Oh, come on. Why would I be?

MARIA
You suffer from depression, you have anxiety-induced fainting spells and panic attacks, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease --

DOGAN
-- I can't grow facial hair, don't forget that one --

MARIA
-- two gall stones, hypertension --

DOGAN
-- or ass hair for that matter.

MARIA
-- and, the last time we saw you, you said you were worried that it was all becoming too much for you to handle at nineteen years of age.

DOGAN
I was exaggerating?

MARIA
Talk to the counselor before you leave today. Please?

DOGAN
Anything for you, Maria.

Maria rolls her eyes and picks up her laptop.

MARIA
Doctor Glover will be in shortly.

DOGAN
Hey, who's that new girl?

MARIA
Stay out of trouble, Dogan.

Maria leaves.

Dogan sighs. His feet fidget at the end of the table. He spots a paper on the bulletin board that reads *"TURN OFF PHONES,"* accompanied by an outdated 80s cell phone clip-art graphic. Next to it hangs a poster of a cat dangling from a clothesline with the caption, *"DON'T GIVE UP!"*

Dogan's legs swing faster -- a full-on pee-pee dance.

DOGAN
Stupid meds.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM LOBBY - DAY

Dogan sneaks out of the Exam Room and heads to the Unisex Restroom. A few startled nurses chatter nearby.

MALE NURSE
-- said he's never seen anything like it. Maybe bath salts, or --

Dogan locks himself inside the restroom.

INT. UNISEX RESTROOM - DAY

Dogan sits on the toilet, eyes fixed on a wall-mounted box of hazardous materials. He snaps a phone pic of the biohazard symbol and tries to upload it to social media. It fails.

The door handle wiggles.

The shadows of two little feet appear at the crack at the bottom of the door.

DOGAN
Yo, somebody's in here!

TURTLE TOY (O.S.)
(distorted, creepy)
I see you.

Dogan's eyes bulge fearfully. Then, a SPLASH in the bowl.

The kid's shadow disappears from beneath the door.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM LOBBY - DAY

Dogan steps out of the restroom.

TURTLE TOY (O.S.)
I see you.

Dogan glances across the hall; A nurse speaks to a crying Eunice in front of Louise's Exam Room. Movement is visible through the crack of the door. Penny peeks in.

Dogan takes a step toward them for a closer look when DR. GLOVER (50s), an older "McDreamy" type, intercepts him.

DR. GLOVER
Dogan. Just the man I wanted to see. Ready?

DOGAN
Yeah. Sure.

Glover makes an "after you" gesture. They proceed toward Dogan's Exam Room.

A GUTTURAL GROAN emits from Louise's Exam Room.

INT. DOGAN'S EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Glover listens to Dogan's chest through a stethoscope. Dogan winces and squirms away. Glover pays him a concerned glance.

DR. GLOVER
Is there pain?

DOGAN
A little. Biffed it on my board yesterday.

DR. GLOVER
We can certainly take a look at it. Lift up your shirt?

DOGAN
It’s nothing. Just a bruise.

Dogan fidgets and clears his throat.

Dr. Glover squints, suspiciously.

DR. GLOVER
I’m concerned.

DOGAN
About what, specifically?

Glover takes Dogan’s pulse.

DR. GLOVER
All of this. I’m seeing many signs of self-destructive behavior.

DOGAN
Nah, I’m good. Just anxious today.

DR. GLOVER
I see. And, what are you doing to relieve stress?

DOGAN
Memes and TikToks. But only when I have signal. So, what’s the deal with this place, anyway? I can’t post on my phone -- you guys really need to do something about that.

DR. GLOVER
The signal is only strong by the receptionist’s desk for some reason, unless you’re connected to the WiFi.

DOGAN
And, what might be the password?

Glover shines his penlight into Dogan’s ears.

DR. GLOVER
Well, unfortunately, we have a *no cell phone* policy here. There are signs all over the clinic.

DOGAN
And you wonder why I’m anxious?

Glover sets his penlight and stethoscope on the table. He takes a deep breath.

DR. GLOVER
You're taking a lot of unnecessary risks on that skateboard despite your current state of health.

DOGAN
Well, you know, with all the shit that's wrong with me, sometimes I feel like it's better to be miserable on my own terms rather than have life bend me over like usual.

DR. GLOVER
Dogan...

DOGAN
Hey, what's up with that lady across the hall?

DR. GLOVER
I'm not at liberty to say. But I can tell you with confidence that she is receiving the best care possible, and you have nothing to worry about.

DOGAN
I wasn't worried.

DR. GLOVER
Well, young man, I think you'd have even less to worry about if you adopted a healthy diet and a consistent exercise regiment.

DOGAN
I'll start tomorrow.

DR. GLOVER
All kidding aside.

DOGAN
Tonight, then!

Glover updates Dogan's file on his laptop.

DR. GLOVER
How's the Ranitidine working out?

DOGAN
Is that the --

DR. GLOVER
For the heartburn. Is it helping?

DOGAN
I mean, it's not as good as the pink ones, but it's better than nothing.

DR. GLOVER
These ones aren't bad. Just make sure you take them as prescribed, twice daily. Twelve hours apart, ideally. Set phone reminders if you have to.

Dogan yanks the pill bottle out of his pocket, shakes them.

DOGAN
After that trip to the emergency room that I'll never pay off? The whole reason I have to take these little bastards in the first place? Yeah, I won't forget. I take them at six A.M. and six P.M. exactly.

A CLICK comes from the intercom system, followed by --

INTERCOM (V.O.)
Attention all available personnel. We have a code blue in exam room six.

Glover becomes stoic. He picks up his laptop and stands.

DR. GLOVER
You'll have to excuse me.

DOGAN
You're lucky I cleared my day for this.

Glover leaves.

Dogan sighs. He yanks out his phone and watches his signal bar fluctuate. Suddenly, five text messages and eight new voicemails appear on his display -- all from *"MOM."*

DOGAN
Ugh. You're so obsessed with me.

Dogan grimaces and plays a voicemail on speaker phone.

MOM (V.O.)
(choppy, on the phone)
Dogan -- need to -- ? Where -- --
to call -- -- soon -- it's -- -- --
as you --!

Dogan shrugs it off and scrolls through his new text messages from his mom. They read: *"WHERE ARE YOU?" "CALL ME!" "ARE U OK? CALL ME NOW!" "DOGAN WHERE ARE YOU???"*

DOGAN
She has the ovaries to call me
dramatic.

Dogan types *"I'M AT THE CLINIC (LIKE I TOLD YOU), CALL YOU AFTER."* He taps send, but the message fails to go through.

DOGAN
Shenanigans.

A SCREAM COMES FROM THE HALLWAY.

Dogan jumps. He gets up and slowly creeps to the door. He presses his ear against the wood and listens.

COMMOTION, CRASHING, AND AGITATED VOICES ARE HEARD.

Dogan takes a deep breath and opens the door a crack. People in scrubs and lab coats rush past the door in all directions.

Dogan steps into the --

EXAMINATION ROOM LOBBY

Dogan dodges a paramedic and sees chaos in the cubicles between himself and Louise's room -- overturned furniture, scattered papers and frantic patients and clinic personnel.

Further Down the hallway, a few doctors and nurses -- including Glover and Maria -- tend to fallen colleagues on the bloody tile.

DOGAN
Doctor Glover?

Glover turns around, white as a sheet, and waves Dogan back.

DR. GLOVER
Stay in the exam room, Dogan! Don't
come out till I say it's okay.

Another horrific SCREAM in the distance.