

Acid Casualty

INT. STAIRCASE. DAY.

Screen reads: April. An apartment stairwell. A woman and a mans feet trudge up the stairs, their heels crushing the dry dead flowers littering the floor. A loud knock on the door.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

A colorful and disgusting kitchen. Fruit flies buzz. The air is hazy with smoke. A half starved girl with long frizzy hair and sunken eyes, EMILY pulls open the door while her counterpart, JANE crouches on the stairs next to her, sipping slowly from a large teacup. JENNY, a young mod with perfectly coiffed hair and RICK a thin man with long hair enter.

JENNY

Hello! We're here for Syd.

EMILY

Syd's not here.

JENNY

I know he's here! I dropped him off this morning.

JANE

What, you can't keep track of your own boyfriend?

Jenny looks angry.

RICK

Where is he?

JANE

He's working. Can't be interrupted.

She takes a sip of tea.

RICK

So what is it? Is he not here or is he working? He's supposed to be at band practice.

JENNY

Can I at least see him?

EMILY

No!

JANE

He left specific instructions. Do not disturb.

Emily begins to force Jenny and Rick out the door. She is mumbling "I knew he shouldn't have moved into this building" ect. As she's forced out. We see BOB, a thirty year old man sitting smoking at the table.

BOB
Where is he?

Jane and Emily look at each other. Jane raises the teacup to Emily who takes it in her hands and takes a sip. A muffled thump is heard in the background.

EMILY
(giggles)
Well he started talking to himself,
going a bit mad

JANE
Didn't seem to know we were there.

EMILY
He kept talking to the voices in
his head.

JANE
So we locked him in the closet.

They laugh.

INT. CLOSET. DAY

We see SYD, terrified, his face is lit only by the slats in the closet door.

INT. ONSTAGE. NIGHT

Closeup of Syd, his face centered. His eyes are closed. Psychedelic Patterns of light are projected across his face. They pulse in time with the music. His mirrored guitar, hanging at his hips, flashes in the colored light.

The song builds up. In the background there is a constant note droning. It gets louder and louder, beginning to swirl, as if being spun around the room.

Syd places a sugar cube onto his tongue, his eyes open, pupils dilated.

The rotating drone sound fades into the sound of a siren on the street, naturally, blending together.

EXT. A DESERTED LONDON STREET. NIGHT.

A deserted London Street. It's 2am and sounds of laughter can be faintly heard in the distance. It's raining slightly. The siren sound fades away.

A brick wall is lined with posters of a neon pop art photo of Syd's face with "ACID CASUALTY" written in neon block letters above.

Syd walks in front of the walls of posters without acknowledging them. He descends into the subway station.

We hear the sounds of the night, his shoes on the pavement, drops falling into a puddle. Distant laughter. They are all amplified. Surreal. They echo more than they should, slowing down at random intervals.

EXT. BUS STOP. NIGHT.

Syd sits on a bench waiting for his bus. The sounds of the city cut through the psychedelic dreamscape of sound. In front of him on the sidewalk is a vase of bright flowers teetering precariously. Syd stares at the flowers, picks one up.

INT. SYD'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Syd's sparsely decorated room. The floor is painted in purple and orange stripes. There is a crookedly framed poster and some painted canvases scattered around. A twin mattress rests without a frame on a dusty floor. Pieces of paper with half written poems and sketches litter the ground. A self portrait is leaned against the wall. He sets the flower from the train into a similar vase on a small table.

We see a paintbrush painting a bright red swirl. As the scene widens we see Syd's face, intent on the painting. He's sitting cross-legged on the floor painting a huge mirror with the same sort of psychedelic patterns as the subway car. He takes a good look at his own face and with a huge brush stroke, wipes it out with paint. The swirling noises are still echoing in his ears.

EXT. ENTRYWAY. DAY.

Three months earlier. Screen reads: January. The entrance to a brick building on a London street.

Emily wears a colorful outfit and is crouched on the entryway to her building. Jane, leans against the way. They pass a joint back and forth, the smoke wafting lazily into the sky.

Syd approaches the entry. He's younger, well dressed, less tired and has shorter hair. He's carrying a guitar case and a crumpled piece of paper. The paper reads ROOM FOR LET in large bold letters. Syd nods to Emily and Jane.

JANE

Oh my gosh, are you Syd Barrett?

SYD

Yes.

EMILY

Far out!

SYD

Is this the flat?

He holds out the paper. Jane takes it, giggling and smiling at him.

JANE

Yes!

EMILY

Bob is in there. He's the owner.
May be in the basement. You're
welcome to go in.

She motions with her head towards the door. Syd walks up the steps and enters the building as the girls watch attentively. They turn to each other.

JANE

Oh my gosh!

EMILY

I can't believe that was him.

JANE

I saw him the other night at the U-
FO! He's quite good.

EMILY

And quite fit!

They giggle.

EMILY

Did you see his clothes?

JANE

So groovy!

EMILY

I hear his ex girlfriend is dating
Marc Bolan!

JANE

No! I wish I was dating Marc Bolan!

INT. DARKROOM. DAY.

A dark room with only red lights illuminating. There are clotheslines with serrated sheets of blotting paper clipped on them. Bob sits in the center, his face half illuminated by the red light. He dips a sheet into a tub of chemicals in front of him.

There is a knock on the door.

BOB

Emily? Come in.

Syd enters, letting a sliver of light into the room. Bob shields his eyes.

SYD

Hello.

BOB

Who are you?

Bob jumps up hurriedly, trying to shield what he is doing.

SYD

I'm Syd. I'm looking to rent a
room.

BOB

Syd?

Syd nods.

SYD

Yes.

BOB

Alright then. Can you pay rent?

SYD

Yes. I've got a band. We sell quite
a lot of records.

BOB

(shrugging)

Okay. Room's yours.

Syd steps closer, examining one of the blotting sheets.

SYD
Are you ... making LSD?

Bob nods.

BOB
You trip?

SYD
Here and there.

BOB
I make the best stuff in London.

SYD
It's amazing isn't it? That
something so small can expand your
mind to the very ends of the
universe.

BOB
That it is. Do you want to buy
some?

SYD
No. I'm too in the clouds as it is.
I need to keep my feet on the
ground this week.

Bob laughs. He shuffles in his pocket and pulls out a keyring. He removes a key and places it on the table.

BOB
Here's the key to your room. Very
top floor. Through the kitchen and
up the stairs.

SYD
Thank you.

BOB
Be careful of those girls. Fellow
like you, they'll be all over you
like vultures.

Syd's eyes widen but he laughs uncomfortably. Bob goes back to what he is doing. Syd takes the keys and leaves.

EXT. ENTRYWAY. DAY

Emily and Jane are leaning against the wall of the entryway when Syd exits. He doesn't notice them and turns to leave.

EMILY

Wait! Syd!

He spins.

SYD

Oh! Hello.

They approach him.

JANE

What do you think? Are you going to take the room?

He nods.

SYD

Yes, I think so.

They giggle.

JANE

Groovy!

Emily reaches out, running her finger along his vest.

EMILY

Maybe you'll trip with us sometime.

JANE

Oh yes, say you will .

Syd recoils.

SYD

(a little disgusted)
Um, I'm good thanks.

Emily recoils, hurt.

SYD

(awkwardly)
Well, nice to meet you!

He leaves.

JANE
 (pouting)
 I thought he was into tripping!

EMILY
 (frustrated)
 Of course he is. His music is so far out. He's like a psychedelic messenger. Traveling to new planes of existence and bringing the magic back!

JANE
 Why did he say no then? Do you think he's stopped?

They begin to turn sinister.

EMILY
 Must have. I can't think of why else.

JANE
 But his music won't be the same without it.

EMILY
 Well if he's not going to do it himself, we could always help him along, don't you think?

JANE
 What do you mean?

EMILY
 (whispering)
 Slip a little into his morning tea.

Emily gasps.

JANE
 No!

EMILY
 For art. We can't waste him. Think of the things we'd be helping him create. I mean, if he won't do it with us what choice do we have?

JANE
 I suppose you're right.

She takes another drag.

JANE

Okay.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY.

Screen reads: April. A room tightly packed with instruments. Some velvet jackets are thrown amongst cables and amps. The band is trying to play. Nick is at the drums, Rick at his keyboard and Roger holds a bass guitar.

ROGER

Fuck it! Syd's not coming.

RICK

He'll come.

They stand awkwardly. Roger tunes his guitar angrily. Nick taps his foot on the bass drum anxiously.

They all turn to the door as Syd enters, still in his socks, disheveled and paint-splattered. Rick breaths a sigh of relief and Roger rolls his eyes. He picks up his precious mirror guitar. Syd stands out in his red shirt amongst the cool grays and blues of the studio and other band member's outfits.

NICK

Syd, you're 2 hours late.

Nick meets his eyes, waiting for more. Some explanation? Anything...

SYD

(looking down)

I'm here. I saw some flowers on the way here. Bright and golden like the sun.

He looks to the floor, to Nick.

SYD

Looking for a place to run.

RICK

(frustrated)

Syd! Syd! Focus.

SYD

(under his breath)

Run... Fun... I'm done. Done with something. Rushing. Brushing.

ROGER
Are you tripping?

SYD
(a bit frantic)
No! No! My brain is winding, I'm
finding

ROGER
I don't believe you.

SYD
It wore off. I went to sleep. But I
woke up and it's still deep.

Syd steps back.

SYD
I'm here. I'm there, I'm not
anywhere.

Nick leans in, nearly touching foreheads.

NICK
Please Syd, please be at the show
tonight.

INT. ONSTAGE. DAY.

Rick sits at an electric organ on the right. Roger is on the left. Nick's drum kit is in the center. Behind him, raised up is a conspicuous spot in the center where Syd should be. Syd enters and walks to his spot at center stage. He sits cross-legged in the center, picks up his guitar.

ANNOUNCER V.O.
And we're on the air in 3... 2...

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

As the song begins we see it being played through a TV screen, centered on Syd's face. Pull back to reveal the dirty kitchen. The song continues but fades down, cracking from the small TV.

Emily is sitting on the floor. She hits a joint and hands it to Bob, leaning back in a chair next to her. Jane sits on the table, a battered guitar beside her.

Bob hands Emily 3 vials of LSD. She holds one up, looking at it intensely as she speaks. A closeup of her eyes through the glass.

EMILY
(dreamily)
It's quite a good song, don't you
think? He's a bit of a genius.

BOB
Who?

EMILY
Syd.

JANE
I still quite fancy him.

EMILY
As if he's talked to you once since
he moved in!

JANE
(defensively)
He doesn't talk to anyone! He's
mysterious.
But I have a plan. I've written him
a song.

Jane reaches towards the vial.

JANE
Can I see that?

EMILY
No!

She loses her grip, the small glass vial slips from her fingers and onto the ground. Emily gasps in shock. Jane reaches out to the liquid on the floor, her eyes wide. She trails her fingers through the spilled chemical and shattered glass then raises her finger to her lips.

Sound of the door opening. Emily rushes to turn the TV off.

The song ends abruptly. Syd enters holding his guitar case.

EMILY
Oh! Hello Syd. Come sit with us!

SYD
No, I'm just going to head upstairs

JANE
Would you like some tea?

Syd blinks, confused.

EMILY
Sit, Syd, have some tea.

JANE
Tea! Let me get it!

Jane jumps to her feet and goes to pour Syd a cup from a chipped teapot on the counter. Syd regards Emily and Bob.

EMILY
We heard your new song. It was quite good!

BOB
I didn't care for it.

In the background we see Jane spiking the tea with one of the vials. Syd is oblivious. She smiles unnervingly, stirring the tea with a small spoon. She takes a sip of the tea as she walks it over to Syd and puts it into his hands. He looks bewildered but takes the mug, clutching it between his shaking hands.

SYD
(wide-eyed and confused)
Thank you.

He looks away, as if at something off in the distance.

JANE
(desperately)
Syd, you've inspired me to write a song, would you like to hear it?

SYD
No.

He shakes his head and walks away.

INT. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

Backstage, a hallway. Syd looks tired and ragged. He sits in front of a mirror alone. Sounds of tuning up are heard in the background.

Syd is muttering to himself as he crushes up about five white pills with a bottle of men's hair product.

SYD
Will you fit inside my head. Will you come along to bed.

Syd picks up the dripping mess of pills and hair products. It shines and drips in the light as he dumps it on his hair.

INT. ONSTAGE. NIGHT

The hair product/pill mixture dripping down his face. The colors swirl. Syd glares into the light as he hits the same note over and over on his guitar. We see Rick shaking his head and Nick's face from behind the drum set looking defeated.

MONTAGE

A lazily improvised piano plays over scenes of the past.

EXT. LAWN. DAY.

A Brightly lit scene. Syd stands on a grassy lawn, wandering through bushes and picking up a bundle of mushrooms, which he holds up to his face, laughing. A girl holds an old-timey video camera, capturing the moment. Another male friend laughs in the background.

INT. SYD'S ROOM. DAY.

Syd younger, painting furiously. He's painting the self portrait that we see later in his room.

INT: BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

JENNY walks backstage with two other girls, laughing. The turn to exit but are stopped as someone shouts

SYD
Jenny! Wait!

The other girls giggle and exit, leaving Jenny. She's a bit shy as Syd approaches her and shows her a piece of paper.

SYD
Hello!

She smiles tentatively.

SYD
Here, I've done a drawing of you.

Hands her a piece of crumpled paper with a sketch on it.

SYD
Would you like to go out sometime?

Jenny smiles.

EXT. LAWN. DAY.

Syd's male friend rips off a tab of acid and hands it to Syd.

We see the small piece of paper change hands.

There is a break in piano music, a missed note, a jarring chord rings out.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

As we hear the piano keys smash, we see Rick's hand, smashing those very keys. He's got bags under his eyes, he looks stressed. He sits opposite Roger on the piano bench.

Nick sits at the drums, looking over at the two.

ROGER
We're supposed to be a rock band!
We can't be a rock band if our
leader forgets his bloody guitar!

He extinguishes a cigarette, crushing it in his frustration.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Doesn't he realize he's making the
rest of us look like fools?

NICK
It's the drugs.

ROGER
It can't be the drugs. We've all
tripped before we didn't turn out
like him.

NICK
I mean even when we were in
America. He wasn't high then.

RICK
Don't you feel guilty?

NICK
It's not our fault he's gone
completely mental.

ROGER

He's clearly some kind of schizophrenic. They would have told him that if he hadn't followed us home from the hospital.

NICK

It's like Brian Wilson, isn't it?

RICK

What do you mean?

NICK

He's too unpredictable.

He looks to Rick and Roger.

NICK (CONT'D)

We have to let him go.

Roger nods in agreement.

RICK

We can't just let him go! This is Syd's band! He's the reason we're here.

NICK

He's already gone, Rick.

Rick shakes his head, fiddling with switches on his organ.

ROGER

(shrugs)

Maybe we just shouldn't pick him up tonight.

RICK

I'll go talk to him. There has to be something I can do...

INT. SYD'S ROOM. DAY

Jenny and Syd sit across from each other in his bedroom. There are some children's books as well as a camera and some rolls of film scattered around them. Jenny flips through a book of children's rhymes while Syd absently glances through some of his sketches.

SYD
 (Tapping the floor)
 I'm rolling, rolling down a hill.
 Like humpty dumpty can't sit still.

JENNY
 Syd, don't you think you need to
 take a step back from the band?
 Don't you think you'd like to get
 away?

SYD
 (Nodding, he agrees)
 I want to get away. Get away from
 my mind.

A realization

SYD
 I'm falling apart at the seams. My
 yellow shoes and blue trousers
 won't be able to hold me together
 much longer. All of the clouds will
 tear me asunder.

Jenny picks up one of the old-timey children's books and
 stands up, putting her hand on Syd's shoulder in an
 approximation of comfort. She loves him but really doesn't
 know what to do.

She leans back, opening the book. She begins to read.

JENNY
 One for sorrow, Two for joy, Three
 for a girl, Four for a boy,

MONTAGE CONT.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

We see Rick playing again. The piano picks up, it turns into
 a psychedelic song now with a mournful guitar.

INT. ONSTAGE. NIGHT.

Black. It suddenly floods with light as Syd walks forward.

JENNY V.O.

Five for silver, Six for gold,
Seven for a secret, Never to be
told

INT. SYD'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Closeup of a cigarette burning down to the filter. Draw back to see Syd, holding one in each hand. It's burning down to his fingers. He doesn't notice, sitting catatonic in the armchair.

RICK V.O.

He can't hear me anymore. He stands
right in front of me but he's not
there at all.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

We see Jane, a repeat of her pouring the acid into his cup.

JENNY V.O.

Eight for a wish, Nine for a kiss,
Ten for a bird, You must not miss.

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Rick sits at his keyboard.

RICK

His eyes are like black holes where
Syd used to be.

INT. SYD'S ROOM. DAY.

Syd lies on the floor. He's covered in paint, the gel from the UFO club is stuck to the side of his face. He has bags under his eyes. He looks up groggily to see Rick standing there, looking down on him disapprovingly.

RICK

Syd! Syd! Wake up!

Syd opens his eyes and sits up.

RICK (CONT'D)

What happened to you?

SYD

I don't...

RICK

I thought you said you weren't
using drugs anymore.

SYD

I didn't... I... it comes and goes.
But it never really goes away.

Syd picks up his self portrait.

SYD (CONT'D)

It's meant to be me. But it's odd,
isn't it? To have painted myself
when I don't seem to exist at all.

RICK

Syd... Syd I can't do this anymore.
I can't play pretend with you.
Those people downstairs, I think
they're drugging you!

SYD

No? You think so?

RICK

You haven't been yourself in
months. You can't even meet my
eyes.

SYD

What?

RICK

I think you need to get out of
here. How about you stay with me
for a week?

SYD

No.. no.

RICK

Why not?

SYD

I'm stuck here. Stuck in the muck
here. I want to be there, to be
clear. But they're coming for me...

RICK

What are you talking about? Who's coming for you? Let's get out of here.

SYD

No, please don't make me go.

RICK

Syd, if you stay like this they're going to kick you out of the band!

SYD

(genuinely confused)
Why would they do that?

RICK

Don't you see Syd, you're going mad!

Syd blinks, shaking his head. He looks up to meet Rick's eyes but Rick has already turned away. Rick looks shocked at his own outburst.

SYD

Where are you going?

RICK

To get some cigarettes.

Syd nods, Rick exits. Syd sits alone, crouched on his bed staring blankly at the wall.

INT. STAIRWELL. DAY.

The stairwell of Syd's apartment. The stairs are still littered with even dead flowers. Rick slams the door, stumbling down and taking a seat on the first landing. He hangs his head in his hands and lets out a sob.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Rick hands him his guitar and Syd sits cross legged up above the rest of the band. He crouches while they all plug in amps and get ready. He begins to detune his guitar, tuning all the strings to the same note which he plays over and over again. The band members begin protesting loudly, but it gets quieter and quieter as Syd's guitar drowns them out. The band members voices mix in and out of the sound of the guitar, fading away until...

It comes abruptly to an end as Roger unplugs Syd's amp.

ROGER
That's it. You're out.

Rick makes eye contact with Syd but looks away ashamed.

INT. SYDS ROOM. DAY.

Syd and Jenny sit cross-legged across from each other. Jenny snaps the nursery rhyme book shut.

Syd looks up at her, startled by the sound.

SYD
Jenny, could I borrow your camera please?

JENNY
I suppose.

She hands him her camera from where it sits.

JENNY
What for?

Syd ignores the questions distractedly, fiddling with the camera's levers. Jenny sighs, frustrated.

JENNY
Syd, are we still going to the Middle Earth tonight? Frank's going to be there.

Syd shakes his head. Jenny rolls her eyes.

SYD
No. I have to go.

JENNY
Go where?

SYD
There's something I need to remember.

He mutters to himself

SYD
Need to remember before it's untethered.

EXT. A FOREST CLEARING. DAY.

We hear a click, a camera shutter. Film winds, another click.

Pan up to Syd sitting in a field, his painting against a tree.

He photographs the painting. Click, wind, Click!

A frantic bass line begins to play.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY.

Rick sits alone at the piano bench. Jenny enters.

JENNY

Excuse me. I've just come to pick up Syd's guitar.

RICK

How is he?

She shrugs.

RICK

Rog's written a song about him.

JENNY

Who?

RICK

Syd.

JENNY

Why?

An uncomfortable pause. They look at each other. Rick hangs his head.

RICK

Do you think there's something we could have done?

JENNY

I don't know.

Jenny picks up the guitar and exits.

The bass line builds up.

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM RUMBLE RUMBLE

A swirling psychedelic guitar part begins over it.

EXT. A FOREST CLEARING. TWILIGHT.

Jenny's camera on the grass.

We hear a match being lit.

Pan up slowly to see Syd, holding his own self portrait. It's burning. The bass builds into a song.

FADE OUT.