

Mariah Thron

High School Story

Mental Health Pandemic

Scene 1:

Enter on a school lunch scene. 8th grade kids sitting at tables or standing around in circles talking and laughing. Focus on a group of girls sitting in a corner of the room with lunch boxes.

Ellie

Hey, did you guys finish the english homework? It took forever for me to think of a topic to write about!

Mariah

(sitting on desk, chatting and eating a sandwich)

Yeah, I finished but finding a topic was so hard... I decided to write about women's fashion in history.

(takes a bite of her sandwich and notices Katie putting one almond in her mouth at a time, trying to make them last)

Katie, do you have more lunch? Do you want some of my sandwich?

Kate

(looks down at her handful of almonds and answers tense and quietly)

No this is all I want for lunch.

Mariah

Are you sure? That doesn't seem very filling?

(Awkward silence follows as people continue munching their food)

Later in english class Mariah and Katie are sitting next to each other. Katie takes out a notebook and begins solemnly writing something. Mariah strains her eyes to peek at her writing. She notices that Kate is counting the calories she had eaten today. The teacher starts talking and Kate quickly closes the book.

Scene 2: In the bathroom, Ellie and Mariah are talking quietly

Mariah

El, did you notice that Kate is not eating enough food?
I am kind of concerned...

Ellie

I am too! Yesterday on the bus I saw cuts on Gabby's wrist and I've noticed she's started eating less also.

Mariah

(brows furrowing, concern sweeps across her face)

Is this normal? Like I never thought people I know would have eating disorders and I don't really know how to help.

Ellie

I don't know. Maybe we should talk to them?

(raises eyebrows and looks at Mariah)

Mariah

Alright... I can try.

Scene 3: After school. Outside 8th grade classroom.

Kids

Byeee, see ya,etc.

Mariah

Hey Kate, can I talk to you for a second?

Kate

Ok, I have a few minutes before my ride gets here. What's up?

Mariah

(nervously chewing on lip)

I don't know if this is okay for me to say but I just noticed that maybe you're not eating enough or maybe you're hurting yourself?! I don't know I just want you to know you're beautiful and I'm here for you.

Kate

Thanks, I'm fine though... Don't worry about it. I gotta go.

Scene 4: Next morning back at school
(Mariah runs into Ellie walking to the classroom from the bus)

Ellie

Hey so I don't know if you talked to Kate already but I saw on instagram that she follows these sort of suicidal, anorexic accounts.

Mariah

What do you mean? Show me!!

Ellie

Ok, here! Its like all these girls who are super skinny and other girls asking about tips to be skinner... I don't think these kind of pages should exist.

Mariah

(Angrily gives phone back to Ellie)

What the fuck? This is so bad! There are pages to help people continue their eating disorder and self harm? We need to tell an adult.

(Ellie and Mariah go to their teacher Ms. Hall)

Mariah

Hey Ms. Hall do you have a second?

Ms. Hall

Sure! Is everything alright?

Mariah

I think some of the girls in our class are not healthy...I mean like mentally?

Ms.Hall

Do you mean they're harming themselves?

Mariah

(looks up at Ms. Hall and nods sincerely)

Ms. Hall

Thank you for telling me, I will call for a meeting.

Scene 5

Classroom with 23 kids sitting at desks

Ms. Hall pacing in the front

Ms. Hall

Alright guys, I'm going to tell you something that is going to be hard for me. When I was around your age I was bullied a lot for my height and for my sexual orientation. The words people were saying to me hurt me and then I began to hurt myself. I hurt myself so badly that I ended up in rehab. It took me time but I learned to heal and mend my breaks with gold. I carry that time with me and it is part of what makes me who I am.

(The classroom is silent and shocked)

End scene

I wanted to write this to address the issues of mental health at school, especially middle and high school. In my class of 23 people there were 13 girls and 8 of them had eating disorders. Later in the year I learned that 2 of the girls in my class tried to commit suicide. That 8th grade year I learned a lot about mental health, how to help my friends and when to talk to an adult or to intervene. I only wish that I did not have to learn those things from actually experiencing them but rather from a mental health class. During the teenage years and beforehand.