

RITUAL

by

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Inspired by true stories

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TEASER

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Standing on the shore next to a flowing creek is JOSEPH "JOEY" PERRY, 12; white, smart, curious and precocious.

Watching him nearby is JORDAN, 16, biracial Asian/white, people pleaser, gloomy beneath a sunny exterior.

She lets go of a rope swing above the creek and lands in the water with a splash.

She swims to the shore and gets out.

JORDAN

Your turn.

Joey looks from Jordan to the rope swing that is tied to a wide branch of a particularly tall tree. He gulps.

EXT. CREEK - MOMENTS LATER

Joey stands on the heavy branch with the rope swing in his hand, petrified.

JORDAN

You can do this, Joey. You do way scarier skateboard stunts.

JOEY

I do okay on the ground. I just don't like heights.

JORDAN

C'mon. Being brave doesn't mean you're never scared.

JOEY

I'm not feeling it.

Joey looks back and forth from Jordan to the rope swing. He's about to jump, but instead starts climbing down.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Next time.

Joey gets to the ground trying to hide the tears in his eyes, as Jordan comes up to him.

JORDAN

Hey, you made it up the tree, right?

JOEY

I guess so.

JORDAN

No, you did. Now all you gotta do is take that one more step. Simple.

Jordan tries to poke Joey in the belly, but he slaps her off.

INT. LIVING ROOM, ZEB MCCORMACK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ZEB MCCORMACK, 42, white, sleazy, graying hair, greasy t-shirt, is sprawled in front of the TV with a beer. On his wall are kids' movie posters, one featuring a superhero named Eagleman. He's alarmed to see an intruder walk in the room:

XANDER SIMERLY, 25, white, perceptive, disarming yet guarded, an out of the box operator.

MCCORMACK

What the *fuck*?! How did you get in?

McCormack jumps to his feet.

XANDER

Kitchen window was open.

MCCORMACK

Get outta my house! I'm calling the cops.

He reaches for his phone. Xander punches him before he can dial. McCormack hits the floor.

XANDER

I don't think so. People like you don't call the cops.

He kicks McCormack hard in the ribs. McCormack howls.

MCCORMACK

Who are you?

XANDER

You wouldn't know me. But I've been watching you for a long time.

He kicks him again.

XANDER (CONT'D)

You thought you could get away with what you did. Thought you were invisible. But invisible people are watching you.

MCCORMACK

I was acquitted. Fair and square.

Xander kicks McCormack in the balls. McCormack doubles over, eyes streaming from the pain.

XANDER

Inadmissible evidence. A hung jury. A travesty of justice. But you're gonna be a reformed character from here on out. 'Cuz I'm here to warn you: you're gonna be looking over your shoulder for the rest of your miserable life.

Xander kicks him some more, grinding his boot down into his groin. McCormack screams.

MCCORMACK

Jesus-fucking-Christ. I didn't torture anyone. Not like this.

XANDER

You think what you did to those girls wasn't torture?

McCormack manages to crawl to his feet.

MCCORMACK

You better just kill me now, or I will call the cops on you.

Xander laughs.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. GLEN PARK - LITTLE COMPTON, RI - DAY

At a picnic table, Joey plays on his phone, with an app: "Eagleman Returns." A winged superhero flies over a maze, zapping bad guys with X-ray vision.

Joey's mother MAUREEN, 32, white, devoted, cheerful, grades papers.

MAUREEN

Hey Joey, we said no screen time for the next hour. The whole idea was fresh air.

JOEY

Smells like car exhaust.

MAUREEN

Can you just take a stroll? Tell you what, can you bring me five different species of leaf and three types of rocks?

JOEY

Sedimentary and metamorphic should be easy, but there's no way there's an igneous rock here.

Maureen sighs. Joey wanders off, dissatisfied.

Maureen's phone rings. She looks at the screen and rolls her eyes.

MAUREEN

What, Mitch?

Joey looks back at her, gets his phone out again.

YOUNG GIRLS play soccer nearby.

Joey plays his game, walking, not looking up.

MAUREEN

No, not really, why? Because unlike you... sure, well, Mitch...

EXT. GLEN PARK - LITTLE COMPTON, RI -DAY

Now out of sight from his mother, Joey practically walks into:

JOEY

Jordan.

Jordan touches a finger to her lips and motions for him to follow. Back at the bench:

MAUREEN (INTO PHONE)
Look, I'm not doing this now, okay? Well,
you should've thought of that before you
started stalking me...

Joey turns to see his mother still absorbed on her phone.

MAUREEN (INTO PHONE)
(nastier)
Listen... my attorney...

JORDAN
You're not going to believe who's here.

JOEY
Who?

She leads Joey toward a Parks and Recreation van.

MAUREEN (O.S.)
(loudly)
Because it's court-ordered.

INT./EXT. VAN/GLEN PARK STREET - CONTINUOUS - DAY

RAFAEL CASTILLE, 34, white, well built, is dressed as Eagleman, with a beaked hood and a winged cape. He hangs out in the back of the van.

ALEX KRAUS, 25, white, sensitive, timid, detached from the kind heart he conceals, is in the driver's seat of the van. He is a doppelgänger of Xander, save for a crew cut hairstyle.

JORDAN
Hey, you got a fan here!

RAFAEL
Aw, we're just packing up. But hey, I
always got time for a fan.

Joey steps closer to the back.

JOEY
You're dressed as Eagleman?

RAFAEL
I play Eagleman.

JOEY

Nah, that's Marco Andrez.

RAFAEL

Smart man, and I'm Rafael Castille, stunt double. We've been here giving out tickets to the new movie.

Joey grins. Finally pockets his phone.

INT. XANDER'S OFFICE, FBI BUILDING - DAY

Xander props his feet on the desk to read a file. He puts them back down, as his boss, Superintendent DOUGLAS BANKS, 60, cranky, enters the room.

XANDER

Hi, Banks.

BANKS

You've been doing good work, Royleson. The Harris and Lane cases. The McCormack case.

XANDER

Thank you.

Xander seems at unease.

BANKS

For what that one was worth. Guy got off on a technicality.

XANDER

So I heard. Can't win 'em all.

BANKS

We all know what you did.

Xander freezes.

XANDER

Sir?

BANKS

You totally nailed that asshole. Weeks of investigation, long hours beyond the call of duty. He shoulda gone down.

XANDER

Where are you going with this?

BANKS

I'm moving you to a new unit. Still violent crimes. But a new initiative.

Xander relaxes.

BANKS (CONT'D)

You okay?

XANDER

Yeah, yeah, fine. I thought you were gonna suggest time off. Not that that would be bad. New, how?

INT. MAIN AREA, FBI BUILDING - DAY

Banks leads Xander through.

BANKS

Well, the crimes aren't new; the unit is. Since the 60s, there've been abuse cases involving elements of violence and ritual. Mostly unrelated, we thought. Until a prosecutor, Ella Fernandes cross-referenced the files with child abduction and human trafficking across several states.

XANDER

I don't like where this is going.

BANKS

Talking to survivors, she found eerie similarities between the stories throughout the country. Enough that she wanted to make a move to the F.B.I.. There's a degree of organization between these groups.

XANDER

So, pedophile rings?

BANKS

Yes, and more.

XANDER

(sarcastic)

Great. Does this come with a raise?

Banks pushes open the door to an office.

BANKS

You get a new office.

INT. XANDER AND ELLA'S OFFICE, FBI BUILDING - DAY

Banks shows Xander an office smaller than the one he came from but with two desks.

ELLA FERNANDES, 32, Latinx, dignified, reserved, a perfectionist, who sacrifices self-care for work, sits at one of the desks. She looks up from her computer.

BANKS

Xander, have you met Ella Fernandes?

Ella shakes his hand.

XANDER

We've seen each other around.

BANKS

You'll be reporting to Ella as she heads up the new Ritual Crimes Investigation Unit.

XANDER

Ritual isn't a crime. Freedom of religion?

ELLA

Crime can be committed in the context of certain rituals. We'll be investigating ritualized and mind-control crimes, primarily perpetrated against children.

Xander frowns. Banks nods and exits.

XANDER

So there's enough of this to warrant its own unit? Didn't "Sexual Exploitation" use to cover it?

ELLA

An audit found that in nearly all cases where there was ritual abuse, the prosecutors ignored the ritualized aspects. By focusing on individuals, we'll never address more than the tip of the iceberg.

XANDER

Who else is on the team?

ELLA

It's just you and me, for now. Take a seat; there's a lot of info to get you up to speed.

She grabs a giant stack of files from her desk.

EXT. GLEN PARK - DAY

Maureen hangs up in a huff, then looks around, stands up, and shades her eyes from the sun.

MAUREEN

Joey? Where'd you go, bud?

INT./EXT. VAN/GLEN PARK STREET - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Rafael walks deeper into the van and rummages in cardboard boxes.

ENRIQUE

I got special edition comic books if you get the right Eagle-spin.

He points to a spinning wheel on a stand. Joey looks to Jordan.

JORDAN

Go, spin the wheel!

Joey hops into the van and spins the wheel.

EXT. GLEN PARK SOCCER FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Frantic, Maureen beelines to PARENTS on the sidelines.

MAUREEN

Have you seen my son, he's twelve, blue shirt?

They all shrug or shake their heads. Starting to panic, Maureen races onto the field to the soccer players.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Jordan slams the van doors closed! Joey is thrown off-balance as the van pulls away!

Rafael slams him to the floor of the van and jams a hand over his mouth. Joey bites down hard. Rafael wails in pain as the truck takes off.

RAFAEL

Ahhh! Little shit.

EXT. GLEN PARK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Hysterical, Maureen darts out onto the path of the oncoming van. Alex slams the brakes and barely avoids bulldozing her.

Maureen doesn't even notice the van, still whipping her head back and forth, yelling

MAUREEN
Joooooooo-eeeeeeey...

INT./EXT. VAN - MOVING - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Joey and Rafael slide towards the front of the van. Joey's face pressed against the glass as he sees Maureen and screams.

JOEY
Help! HELP!!

Unwitting, Maureen runs past the van without looking inside.

EXT. INSIDE VAN - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Rafael duct-tapes Joey's mouth shut - then fills a syringe from a vial. On the inside of his left wrist is a tattoo of a blue-green peacock. He administers the shot to Joey.

RAFAEL
(with reverent devotion)
You're lucky. What an honor to be chosen. You can't be free before you know you are in shackles.

Rafael slowly moves a group of peacock feathers around Joey and touches them to his forehead. Joey struggles to keep awake, but his eyes blink several times, then close. He passes out. Blackout.

INT. XANDER AND ELLA'S OFFICE, FBI BUILDING - DAY

Xander's desk is messy with papers. Ella types furiously into her computer. Xander, reading, shakes his head.

XANDER
I've seen some sick shit, but -

ELLA
That's precisely why you were chosen.

XANDER

If this is all as big as you say, how come I'm just now reading about it?

ELLA

Let me ask you this: how do you get court testimony from four and five-year-olds? Especially because when they're raised in a cult, none of them talk. Even the older ones won't tell what happened to them.

XANDER

Pff. Brainwashing, torture, forced drug use... After all that, I guess they wouldn't make the best witnesses.

ELLA

A lot of the mind programming is aimed at making sure they don't EVER tell.

XANDER

I see these cults are big into Nazi memorabilia?

ELLA

It's deeper than that. In my opinion, Hitler was a member. Some of the experiments in the camps were to perfect their mind-control programming.

XANDER

Lovely. Do I get to go away and mull this over?

ELLA

We don't have time. I've been on Banks for weeks to get me help.

XANDER

Why now?

ELLA

We're coming up on the Autumnal Equinox. A high holy day for ritual worship. Every year for the past three years, a child has gone missing in Newport County. Permanently.

Xander puts down the file, disconcerted.

EXT. PRIVATE HOME - PROGRAMMING ROOM - DAY

The van drives through a large private compound and pulls up in front of a huge gated home. Trees around the grounds shelter it from view.

Rafael carries the drugged Joey in his arms to the house. Alex opens the door for him.

INT. PRIVATE HOME - ENTRANCE FOYER - DAY

Classical Wagner plays as BENJAMIN KRAUS, 56, white, brilliant, dominant, manipulative, and easy to anger, hums jovially with the music. He has a blue-green dove tattoo on his arm. Rafael enters carrying Joey.

BENJAMIN

Ah, our new recruit.

(To Rafael)

Put him in the white room. And set up the cameras in the red place.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. GLEN PARK - LITTLE COMPTON, RI - NIGHT

Ella and Xander approach FOUR RHODE ISLAND COPS, 20s-30s.

XANDER

We're looking for Chief Thompson?

JAMAL COX, 30s, African American, class clown, and street-smart, joins them.

JAMAL

Lemme see... two sharp suits, lurking in a dark sedan in the dead of night, mean: mobsters, blues band, or FBI...

Ella flashes her badge, unamused.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

And you're here... why?

XANDER

We need to see if this kidnapping is connected to a West Warwick ring we're working on.

Jamal waves his arm, presenting the surroundings.

JAMAL

Little Compton, Rhode Island. Nothing exciting ever happens here. Ever.

ELLA

Then you don't know your own beat.

JAMAL

Oh really? I'm all ears.

ELLA

How about we start over? Are you Chief Thompson?

Jamal clicks on his phone and hands it to Ella.

JAMAL

No, he's making his TV debut.

ON JAMAL'S CELL:

INT. A MODEST LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

POLICE CHIEF RALPH THOMPSON, 40, white, a sports nut, down to earth but territorial, gives a live interview on a couch, next to a tearful Maureen.

THOMPSON

We're looking for volunteers to help with the search.

BACK TO GLEN PARK

Ella hands the phone back.

ELLA

We still need to talk to him.

JAMAL

Mind if I tag along?

EXT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE - LITTLE COMPTON, RI - NIGHT

A police cruiser is parked outside, its lights flashing against the dark night and the building. Ella, Xander, and Jamal walk up, just as:

MITCH PERRY, 35, white, tattooed, narcissistic, with a chip on his shoulder, barges out of the house. Thompson follows him.

THOMPSON

Mr. Perry, unless you agree to questioning, we'll have to take you down to the station.

Mitch struggles against Thompson.

MITCH

I'm not the one who lost him.

Hot on Mitch's heels is Maureen.

MAUREEN

He was abducted, you asshole!

MITCH

Because someone wasn't watching.

Mitch goes for Maureen, jerking away from Thompson, but Jamal instantly pins his arms behind his back.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Where's my son, Maureen?

Mitch flashes a mean stare at Ella and Xander, as Thompson and Jamal throw him against the cruiser.

Jamal pats him down, then removes a crack pipe from his pocket.

MITCH (CONT'D)

That's not mine.

JAMAL

Guess this dub bag isn't either.

He holds up a tiny bag with a small crack rock at the bottom.

MAUREEN

You moron, Mitch.

JAMAL

You're under arrest for possession of an illegal substance.

Jamal cuffs Mitch and reads him his rights as he shoves him into the cruiser. Maureen heads for her car, wiping tears.

MAUREEN

I have to get back to the park.

Thompson hurries over to get between Maureen and her car door. She tries to force her way past him. Then she walks into the street to try to get in on the other side.

THOMPSON

Ma'am, I'm sorry, but --

MAUREEN

Please.

Maureen shrieks as a car whips by and almost sideswipes her. She collapses hyperventilating on the street. Ella bends over her and checks Maureen's pulse, then looks up at Xander.

ELLA

911.

Xander makes the call. Ella looks at Maureen.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Maureen, look at me. I need you to slow your breathing. In and out. Good. Again.

INT. FLASHBACK - XANDER'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

Four-year-old Xander waits at the window. Another CHILD, 12, approaches him from outside.

CHILD

We're making slime now, with the fake snow. Come on, you've been stuck in there for hours.

XANDER

No, I have to wait for Mom. What if she never comes home?

EXT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE - LITTLE COMPTON, RI - NIGHT

Xander snaps back to attention.

MAUREEN

I need to - we need to find him.

Maureen tries to breathe between her sobs.

ELLA

We're going to do everything in our power to find Joey. Okay? You need to trust us. In and out. In and out. There you go.

Thompson comes from around the car and they both help Maureen away from the road. Ella stands and approaches Xander.

XANDER

We've no evidence that this kid's disappearance is related to our line of inquiry.

ELLA

Excuse me?

XANDER

You know we could be removed from this case if we can't prove a link.

(looking to Maureen)

Best not to make promises?

Now Ella looks to Maureen, who's managing her breathing, but can't stop the tears.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Nervous, Mitch rocks back and forth across a large table from Ella and Xander. The baggie and the crack pipe between them.

ELLA

And between three and five today?

MITCH

Kristen came into the tatt shop around three and... I took those off her 'cuz she admitted she'd used again. She'd been clean six months. I was trying to help her.

ELLA

Drugs are the local's problem. Do you know who may have grabbed Joey?

MITCH

If I knew I'd tell you. That kid is the fucking greatest thing I ever got outta that marriage.

Ella sighs, withering, thinks a beat, then:

ELLA

But if Maureen is the one who lost him, that would put you in a pretty great light, huh?

Mitch looks confused. Even Xander turns to Ella.

MITCH

What?

ELLA

I mean, in a custody battle, if one of the parents lost their kid, well, that puts the other parent pretty far ahead.

Mitch leans forward.

MITCH

You think I'd use Joey like that?

XANDER

I don't know, would you?

MITCH

Fuck no.

XANDER

Maureen had some tracks on her arms.

MITCH

Yeah, old. She hasn't fixed in years.

XANDER

But you were the one who got her started, right?

Xander picks up a file and opens it.

XANDER (CONT'D)

Says she almost OD'd twice. Both times you were also shooting up.

MITCH

Fuck you. You think I don't regret those times? I DIDN'T TAKE HIM.

Mitch slams the table, his tears coming down. There is a genuineness to his plea.

Jamal enters the interrogation room.

JAMAL

Your friend Kristen confirmed your alibi and admitted the crack was hers. We're letting you off with a warning.

Mitch starts to get up.

ELLA

Sit.

Mitch sits back down, not sure what's happening.

JAMAL

Chief's orders, ma'am.

ELLA

Yeah, right, Chief of Little Compost, Rhode Island? We're at Federal level.

JAMAL

By the time you get approval, we'll have solved our case.

Ella reluctantly grins, impressed by Jamal's mettle. Jamal leads Mitch out, as Xander turns to Ella.

XANDER

That was... an approach.

ELLA
Had to make sure.

Ella's hands are shaking, which she struggles to conceal, something Xander notices.

EXT. GLEN PARK - DAY

Ella, Xander, and Thompson stand by a P.D. LIEUTENANT, 40s, surrounded by several CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS.

Xander frowns at a stretch of woodland on the perimeter, bordered by a 12-foot high fence.

XANDER
Have you searched the woods, Sir?

THOMPSON
The whole area's fenced tight.

XANDER
Let's go.

Xander immediately beelines for it, and they all follow.

INT. THE COMPOUND - WHITE ROOM - DAY

The room is blurry and white. It comes into focus as Joey blinks groggily. He rubs at the injection spot on his arm.

He bolts upright as he sees he is not alone.

Seated around a table are: Rafael (still wearing the Eagleman costume), CROSS, 30s, white, a rough, inbred-looking sadist, LEWIS, 30s, white, innocent-eyed and fervent, and Benjamin. Aside from Rafael, they are dressed in funeral black.

RAFAEL
It's awake.

CROSS
Well, let's get it on its feet, then.

Lewis, Cross, and Rafael move toward Joey, who shrinks back.

JOEY
Who are you people? You better let me go, right now!

CROSS

Or what? Your poor mother will be distraught?

He reaches for Joey, who punches him away. Cross smiles a twisted smile.

Joey bolts for the door, but Rafael intercepts him.

JOEY

Where am I? This is kidnapping, the police will be looking for me!

Rafael shoves him down. Joey springs to his feet, fierce.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Leave me alone. I'm not afraid of you.

He is powerless to fight them off. Their hands are on him, dragging him across the room. They lay him face-down in front of Benjamin, who bends and extends a hand to him. Joey sees an enamel pin on his lapel in the shape of an eye.

Benjamin helps Joey to his feet.

BENJAMIN

You are most definitely afraid, Joey. And you definitely should be. Right now you are afraid, because you find yourself in a strange place, with strange men.

JOEY

I wanna go home.

BENJAMIN

Once you get to know us, you will be doubly afraid. With every right, given who we represent: who is the most powerful. And what we plan to do to you, which is actually merely the smallest step within our greater, global plan. But which will nonetheless bring you pain.

The men snicker quietly to themselves.

JOEY

Please, let me go!

Joey runs at Benjamin, punching at him, Benjamin doesn't even feel it. Joey breaks down, sobbing.

BENJAMIN

That's it, child. Get it all out. You must stay in this room for a while, as this will be your last chance to cry. We have very strict rules here; you'll soon see.

JOEY

Fuck you! Where's my phone?

BENJAMIN

Forget your phone. You will never see your mother again. You have a new family now.

JOEY

I'm not staying here.

BENJAMIN

There's no escape.

He exits, the other men following. Joey rushes to the window, but it is barred on the inside. He listens to the door locking behind his captors.

EXT. WOODED AREA - GLEN PARK - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Alex walks in the woods near the fence line, wearing a hoodie and sunglasses, being careful not to be seen. Nearby on the other side of the fence are Thompson, Xander, Ella, and Jamal. They approach a gate.

THOMPSON

No one's been here. This fence goes a foot into the ground. There's no sign it's been tampered with either.

They stop at the gate. Xander examines the padlock with his gloved hands.

XANDER

A brand new lock.

THOMPSON

You sure it's new?

Alex peers at Xander carefully. Mouth slightly agape, Alex removes his sunglasses and squints at Xander. They are identical.

XANDER

Glossy paint, no rust, and a pristine logo sticker on the back.

Alex hides with his back against a tree.

Xander takes a homemade skeleton key from his pocket and tries to pick the lock.

THOMPSON

You can't open it with--

XANDER

It's a commercial lock, locally made.

The lock opens with one turn.

XANDER (CONT'D)

What, you guys don't study lock calibration? Fascinating science.

ELLA

You do realize we're about to trespass on private land, right? And where did you even learn to do that?

XANDER

I "picked" up some skills in foster care.

ELLA

Chief Thompson, we'll need permission from the owners to search the property.

(to Jamal)

You questioned Maureen's boyfriend and Joey's sitter?

JAMAL

Craig and Jordan. No new info.

A crunching sound of branches being walked on is heard.

ELLA

Ssshhh. Did you hear that?

Silence. Ella cautiously steps through the gate and into the woods, her hand lowering to grasp her gun. Xander slips right behind. Ella slowly approaches the tree where Alex hides.

She cocks her gun as she whips around the tree. No one is there.

XANDER

Paranoid much?

ELLA

Squirrel, maybe.

Ella re-holsters her gun.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Call the babysitter again.

INT. COMPOUND - ALEX'S ROOM - LATER

Alex is googling DNA testing. He zeroes in on an article.

INT. WHITE ROOM, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Joey sits beneath the window, looks out into the darkness. He's exhausted, his hands still clutching the metal bars that prevent him from leaving. The door unbolts and Alex enters.

ALEX
Come with me.

INT. LOWER HALLWAY, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Joey's eyes scan the hallway for means of escape.

ALEX
If you try to escape, I'll have to hurt you, and I'd really rather not do that. So let's not make this harder for us, all right?

Joey hurries ahead of Alex. There is a door at the end of the hallway, with a flight of stairs before it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
It's locked, so don't even think about it. Upstairs.

Joey hesitates near the bottom of the stairs. Alex gestures upward. His face is not unkind. Joey heads up the stairs.

INT. THE COMPOUND, UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Alex unlocks a door, ushers Joey inside.

INT. DORM ROOM, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

A small dorm room, sparsely furnished. There are five small beds, two of them empty. In the other three, children are lying very still.

ALEX

Evening, guys. Eyes open. Joey, I'd like you to meet your new family. I'll leave you to get acquainted.

Joey runs for the door, but Alex pushes him back. He locks the door behind him. Joey looks at it, then turns around.

The other kids are sitting up, staring at him. He stares back. Silence.

ROSA CASTILLE, 13 years old, biracial Black/Hispanic, kind and parental, with huge eyes and a habit of chewing the ends of her long hair, approaches him hesitantly.

ROSA

Don't be afraid. I'm Rosa. This is Eleanor -

ELEANOR, 4, wearing makeup and nervous, nods to Joey.
TONY, 5, angry and haunted, turns towards the wall.

TONY

Shut up, Rosa.

JOEY

Where are your parents?

No one answers. Joey moves to the window, cups his face with his hands to look outside. He can't see much, but there is a roof not far below. He tries to push the window up, struggles with it.

Rosa lays a hand on his arm.

ROSA

You mustn't try to escape. You already met my dad.

Joey looks around and grabs the only chair. He drags it toward the window, lifts it, ready to break the glass.

Tony catches the chair in mid-swing, wrestles it away.

JOEY

Give it back, asshole!

Tony pushes him roughly to the ground.

TONY

New Boy doesn't know the rules. What are the rules?

The children move toward Joey and gradually encircle him.

CHILDREN

You don't cry, you don't throw up, you
don't say no, you don't run away and you
never tell.

Joey stares, mystified. Tony yells again. The others
chant back at him.

TONY

Quae praecepta sunt?

CHILDREN

Et nolite flere: non est iactare: non
dicent ultra: non fugiendum, et non ad
semper!

Joey covers his ears, distressed.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CLINIC - DAY

Jordan holds a baby squirrel in her hands. A greying AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERINARIAN, 60, hands her a small syringe filled with formula. Along a wall are several cages with animals.

JORDAN

Ohmygod, he's so cute!

Jordan softly strokes the back of the squirrel's head.

VET

Are you trying to kill him? If he believes people are friends, he's likely to be hit with a broom.

Jordan places the syringe's long nipple in the squirrel's mouth.

JORDAN

Sorry, Doctor. He's not a pet.

VET

Hold his head so he can't move.

Jordan hesitates.

JORDAN

I don't want him to feel helpless.

VET

Don't apply human psychology to a squirrel. No more than two CCs.

Jordan holds his head in place. The vet leaves. Jordan looks at the squirrel adoringly.

JORDAN

Here, be free! Drink!

She lets go of his head and holds him loosely in the middle of his body so he can reach the nipple with his little paws.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Such a good eater.

The baby squirrel finishes. Just then an adult squirrel in one of the cages chatters. Jordan turns.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Hey, handsome! Jealous?

Jordan's phone rings. She sees it and reluctantly answers, removing her gloves.

INT. REAL ESTATE BROKERAGE - DAY

Scribbling on a file is Jordan's mom, MRS. ANGELA ROWLAND, 40, Asian, well-dressed, type-A.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION:

JORDAN

Oh, hi, Mom.

MRS. ROWLAND

Jordan? Where are you?

JORDAN

You know. Told you five times.

MRS. ROWLAND

Not studying for tomorrow's test?

JORDAN

I'll study when I get home. I know it inside and out anyway.

A knock on the door.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

I gotta go, Mom, bye.

Jordan looks up as Ella enters.

END INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

ELLA

Jordan Rowland?

INT. PRIVATE ESTATE, THE BARN - DAY

Alex enters a stall with an empty mason jar. A goat sits in the corner. Alex spots a pile of excrement nearby and shielding his hand in a plastic bag, deposits it into the jar.

ALEX

Hi, Horace.

The goat approaches him. Alex looks at the goat's eyes, reaches over and pets it.

BENJAMIN

This is why you've never been promoted.
You *named* the goat?

Alex whips around and sees Benjamin, drinking coffee from a paper cup.

ALEX

There were people outside the perimeter earlier. Cops.

BENJAMIN

They can't come in here.

ALEX

They're going to talk to Jordan.

BENJAMIN

She'll say nothing.

ALEX

Dad... do I have a brother?

BENJAMIN

No. Why do you ask?

ALEX

I don't know I... I saw someone who looks a lot like me.

BENJAMIN

They say everyone has a doppelgänger.
Means nothing.

ALEX

I mean... I wasn't, like, adopted, was I?

Benjamin approaches Alex and lays a hand on his shoulder.

BENJAMIN

No. You're my son, which is why I don't understand how you have no talent. A disappointment since the day you were born. What am I going to do with you? Do you need to go to the blue room again, like a five-year-old?

Alex falls to his knees and lowers his head.

ALEX

No, no, no, no, no, no. I'll try harder.

Benjamin tosses his coffee in Alex's face and throws the cup away. He yanks the jar away from Alex.

BENJAMIN

You just kneel in the shit here for as long as you like. Pathetic.

He walks out. Alex stands slowly, ashamed. Seeing the coffee cup, he retrieves it and slides it inside another bag.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - POLICE STATION - DAY

Mrs. Rowland sits next to Jordan and across from Ella.

Ella points to Jordan's purse, which has a picture of a peacock on it.

ELLA

Nice purse. You like peacocks?

MRS. ROWLAND

Jordan loves animals.

ELLA

Let her answer, please. When did you last see Joey?

JORDAN

Last Friday. After swim practice.

ELLA

Did anything unusual happen... anything at all that sticks out?

JORDAN

No... not really.

Ella looks over to Mrs. Rowland, who is now busy texting.

ELLA

How long have you babysat Joey?

JORDAN

About a year.

ELLA

And where were you yesterday, from three to five PM?

JORDAN

Uh... at the wildlife clinic.

MRS. ROWLAND

Agent Fernandes, she already told your colleagues.

A slight rap on the door. Xander steps in, carrying a soda. He smiles at Jordan, before bending and whispering to Ella.

XANDER

Boyfriend was a dead end. Alibi checks out.

ELLA

Jordan, were you in Glen Park yesterday?

Jordan's eyelids flutter and she shifts in her seat. Jordan looks at the mirrored glass window beside her.

Her reflection transforms - in her mind's eye only - into LISA, 6, covered with scars and wounds, dressed all in black and sitting in a wheelchair.

JORDAN/LISA

(in child's voice)

May I please have a soda? I was a good girl. I wasn't bad.

She addresses only Xander. Stunned, Mrs. Rowland puts down her phone.

JORDAN/LISA (CONT'D)

I'm not bad, right? Am I a good girl?

ELLA

(to Xander)

Get her a soda.

Xander leaves. Jordan leans back, and her eyelids flutter.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Who told you that you were bad?

JORDAN

What?

Back to normal, Jordan looks at Ella like she is crazy.

MRS. ROWLAND

Jordan, honey, are you all right?

JORDAN

I'm fine, Mom. Why?

ELLA
(to Mrs. Rowland)
What time did Jordan arrive home on
Tuesday?

MRS. ROWLAND
I'm not sure exactly.

ELLA
Were you there when she arrived?

MRS. ROWLAND
No.

ELLA
How about Mr. Rowland?

MRS. ROWLAND
He's no longer with us.

ELLA
I'm sorry to hear that.

Jordan rubs her forehead.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Were you in Glen Park on Tuesday?

JORDAN
No. I came right home from work.

MRS. ROWLAND
Jordan's been under a lot of pressure
with her schoolwork. Honey, are you
getting a migraine again?

Jamal and Xander enter. Xander hands a soda to Jordan.
She looks puzzled.

JORDAN
Oh, no, thanks. Sugar.

Ella's phone pings with a text. She checks it, concerned.

MRS. ROWLAND
Honey you just asked--

ELLA
It's fine; excuse me.

INT. PRIVATE HOME - PROGRAMMING ROOM - DAY

Alex lays on a gurney, hooked to a large EEG machine. He's strapped in place. REBEKAH MILLER, 42, cold, efficient and stern, adjusts his IV drip. Benjamin stands next to him.

BENJAMIN

Let's start with your refresh. You do well here this week and we won't need to go to the blue room.

Benjamin sticks electrodes to Alex's body, then clamps wires to them.

REBEKAH

Bereit Alexander? Gut. Start 389FHDF834D.

Rebekah places a loudspeaker by Alex's right ear.

BENJAMIN

I will countdown from ten to one. I need you to go to state Ocean Floor by the time I get to one.

Rebekah turns a dial, Alex arches in pain, as the wires electrify.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Ten... deeper and deeper... nine... eight... calmer and calmer... seven...

Rebekah monitors Alex's progress. She nods.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Good boy. Six... five... concentrate... the machine hurts like the dickens, so just do it. Four... three... two AND one.

Alex's breathing becomes deeper - until he is limp. Benjamin looks up at Rebekah, who nods. He places a virtual reality headset over Alex's eyes. He grabs a small remote and presses it.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Open your eyes but stay at Ocean Floor. What do you see?

A close-up image of a gruesome roadkill of a rabbit. Bizarre and loud distorted noises blare.

ALEX

It's a sign.

BENJAMIN

Good. From who?

Alex breathes heavily.

ALEX

The group. It'll be me if I tell. That's what you'll do to me.

BENJAMIN

Good. Every time you see a crushed animal on the side of the road, you'll know that we put it there. For you. To remind you what will happen if you tell.

ALEX

I won't.

BENJAMIN

I don't believe you. I think you're just saying it.

Rebekah shocks Alex some more. He writhes.

ALEX

I won't. Really. Nobody would believe me anyway.

BENJAMIN

That's exactly right. Do you feel this is a fair punishment?

ALEX

Yes.

BENJAMIN

Again, I don't think so. Work harder, son. Unless you'd prefer the stretch machine? I need you to really, really believe.

ALEX

I do! I swear.

BENJAMIN

Let's hear it then.

ALEX

I wouldn't ever talk! Even if I thought about telling anyone, you'd find out.

BENJAMIN

Yes, we would. And don't forget, all this training will only make you stronger. Much stronger.

He releases the straps. Rebekah unwraps a red lollipop.

REBEKAH

Good boy, Alex. Let baby Ronen come out for being such a good boy. You earned it. I'm very proud of you.

Alex's expression changes, and he turns on his side, laying in a fetal position. He rocks slightly. Rebekah hums and puts the lollipop in his mouth. She strokes his hair. He grasps one of her fingers with his hand. As he sucks, he moves his head back and forward a tad.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Xander finds Ella leaning against the wall, texting.

XANDER

Why are you on Jordan's case? She doesn't know squat.

ELLA

I have a hunch part of her does.

XANDER

Based on what?

ELLA

I believe she switched to a younger part of herself after you walked in. Later, she didn't remember asking for a soda. And the peacock bag makes me wonder.

(off Xander's look)

The "eyes." These people make the kids feel like they're always being watched.

XANDER

Watched how?

ELLA

A kid from my last case was made to swallow a fish's eye. They told him afterward they would always see where he was going and what he was doing.

Ella's phone pings with another text.

XANDER

It sounds... really methodical.

ELLA

It is. They have manuals on brainwashing and torture to make sure they get the right results. Plus if they weren't careful, they could easily kill kids accidentally. They are very fond of almost killing them to get the message across.

Xander looks disturbed. So does Ella when she looks at her phone.

XANDER

You okay?

ELLA

I'm fine.

Ella stares at him holds up her phone.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Some family stuff.

She's visibly upset.

XANDER

You need to go tend to it? I can finish here.

Ella pushes herself off the wall and smiles warmly.

ELLA

Thanks. I'll write up the report later. Do me one favor, though?

XANDER

Sure.

ELLA

Schedule Jordan's mom with a follow-up. Let her know they'll be meeting with Doctor Deer.

Ella walks away.

XANDER

Doctor Deer?

Ella is already gone.

INT. BARN - DAY

Chained to a post, Joey watches a Jack Russell Terrier chase chickens. Sad as he is, he can't resist the cute dog and whistles.

JOEY
Come here, doggie.

The dog wags her way over.

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
Do you like the puppy?

Benjamin appears in the doorway. Joey watches him with trepidation.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
You want to pet her, don't you?

Joey nods. Benjamin unchains his hands from the post.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
You can play with her for a while, but you have to keep her quiet. And you can't leave here, got that? Or there will be consequences - worse consequences than you're used to.

JOEY
I get it.

Joey pets the puppy as Benjamin leaves the barn.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Good girl.

In the shadows of the loft above, Alex watches, shaking his head.

Joey rolls her over and pets her belly. He is startled to realize Alex has joined him.

ALEX
You shouldn't play with the doggie.

JOEY
Benjamin said I could.

ALEX
You just shouldn't.

JOEY
You're a douche, you know that?

Alex looks sorrowfully at Joey, leaves.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - POLICE STATION - DAY

DR. HEALING DEER, 50, Native American man, sympathetic, present and intuitive, sits in an easy-chair. The door opens. Ella ushers Jordan in. Dr. Deer rises. Jordan immediately backs away, fearful.

ELLA

It's okay, Jordan. This is Dr. Healing Deer.

Jordan eyes Dr. Deer - hesitant - then looks back to Ella.

ELLA (CONT'D)

He's a good guy and an excellent psychologist. I'll be right outside if you need me.

DR. HEALING DEER

Please, Jordan. Have a seat, and I'll stay right where I am.

Dr. Deer warmly gestures to a sofa. Wary, Jordan sits and wrings her hands. Behind Jordan, a clock reads 12:12.

INT. THE COMPOUND, ALEX'S ROOM - DAY

Alex opens a drawer, using a key, at the back of which is the paper cup in the plastic bag.

He swipes a swab to the side of his check, then snaps the top and inserts it into a tube and seal.

He then inserts the cup with his sample into an envelope, which he seals.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Joey wincing and fearful as Benjamin bathes him with a sponge. Nasty bruises and cuts are visible on Joey's torso. Behind Joey's back, Benjamin pours rubbing alcohol onto the sponge. Then he mashes the sponge onto one of Joey's cuts.

JOEY

Ouch. Leave me alone, Goddamn it.

BENJAMIN

Not until you stop crying.

Benjamin touches the sponge to the corner of Joey's eye, causing him to jerk away and wince badly.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

You must like this, right?

JOEY

No.

BENJAMIN

Of course, you do, or you would stop crying. Do you know how tiresome it is for me to listen to you whining like that?

ALEX (O.S.)

I'll take over.

Alex appears in the doorway. Benjamin turns, curious.

BENJAMIN

Oh? Finally, willing to contribute?

ALEX

It's my job.

Alex holds his hand out for the sponge, surprisingly firm. Benjamin nods curtly and leaves the room.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I know you must be scared.

Joey lowers his head, ashamed.

JOEY

Why am I here?

ALEX

You don't have to understand it. You just have to get through it.

JOEY

But what is it?

ALEX

We are governed here by One who is all-powerful.

JOEY

You know how cray-cray that sounds?

ALEX

Look, there's going to be a ritual tonight. People will do things to you. So will I.

JOEY

I don't want you to.

ALEX

I am sorry. It will look like I'm doing things to you, but it will really be Robert. That's his job.

JOEY

Who's Robert?

ALEX

One of us.

JOEY

But you're Alex?

Alex looks at himself in the mirror and sees Stephanie, a 64-year-old, kindly grandmother-type.

ALEX/STEPHANIE

I'm Stephanie. I am a part of Alex, but he doesn't know it. I take care of the kids. But not Robert. Robert belongs completely to the group. So whatever he does, he doesn't have a choice.

JOEY

How can he have no choice?

ALEX/STEPHANIE

You have no choice. All you can choose is to stay as quiet as possible. Can you do that?

JOEY

Whatever. Once I hid in a trunk for three hours cuz my dad was mad at me.

ALEX/STEPHANIE

Being in a trunk didn't scare you?

JOEY

Nah, I took a nap. It scared my dad 'cause I was gone so long.

ALEX/STEPHANIE

When things get scary tonight, you could pretend like you're still in the trunk.

(MORE)

ALEX/STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Remember how good you are at being quiet.
It will go much better for you if you are
quiet.

Alex helps Joey up and wraps him in a towel.

JOEY

Why did you tell me not to play with the
puppy?

ALEX/STEPHANIE

Sometimes... sometimes they don't live
long.

JOEY

My dog is nine.

ALEX/STEPHANIE

Yes, but not here. Do you understand?

Joey wipes a tear, his fist clenched.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER - DAY

A clock now reads 2:32. Underneath it, Jamal, Xander, and
Mrs. Rowland look through a one-way mirror to the
observation room, seeing Jordan and Dr. Deer by a
dollhouse.

INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Jordan sits with her eyes closed and takes slow breaths.

DR. HEALING DEER

Now I want you to imagine a place in your
mind's eye. And I am not sure if it will
be a real place, or somewhere you just
made up... but either way, you feel safe
there. And when you're able to imagine
that place, just nod your head "yes".

A beat later, Jordan nods.

DR. HEALING DEER (CONT'D)

Good. And it is up to you if you want to
share the safe place with me or want to
keep it private.

JORDAN

I'm in the water, under a bridge, in the
shade. Just me.

INT. SHRINE ROOM - NIGHT

A room lit with candles. In the background, there is a statue of a man with wings. He has three eyes and a bull's head.

The adult cult members, led by Rebekah, file in, dressed in black robes. On their heads, they wear nemes headcloths like Pharaohs; covering the crown and back of their heads, with two flaps hanging down in front of both shoulders. The flaps are striped in horizontal black and white, except for Rebekah's, which are black and gold.

REBEKAH

Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless our
worship today through the mighty Moloch,
our Lord.

They bow their heads in reverence.

They gather around a horizontal altar, large enough for someone to lie on it.

Alex, also in a black robe, stops in the open door. Seeing them gathered around the altar, he can't breathe. He backs away. Rebekah looks up at him and frowns.

INT. BENJAMIN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Benjamin, naked, slips on a black embroidered robe, stands next to a mantle with symbols and peacock feathers.

A knock comes at the door. Alex enters.

ALEX

I know what will break the boy.

BENJAMIN

Tonight's ritual will break him.

ALEX

He has a terror of small spaces. I forced
it out of him.

BENJAMIN

You're sure?

Alex swallows, nervous of the lie.

ALEX

Positive. Especially if it's quiet.

BENJAMIN

That's the worst thing he can imagine?

ALEX

He just about pissed himself, just confessing it.

BENJAMIN

Well, then that's all we need. We don't need to get more elaborate just yet.

Benjamin takes a bottle of oil and traces an inverted cross on his forehead and chest.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Have Claudia take his place on the altar tonight. She's been a little too chipper lately. Tell the others I'll be a few minutes late. I shall be giving young Joey a gift. His worst nightmare. In a box. A gift to make him strong.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ella and Jamal are watching videos on a large screen. A girl scores a soccer goal.

ELLA

This is everyone's cell footage?

JAMAL

Yeah, I checked online posts from the day Joey disappeared, along with the soccer team's contact list.

Xander enters with several take-out coffees and snacks.

XANDER

They synced the cell footage from the park?

JAMAL

Yeah, five different perspectives of the exact same moment in time.

ELLA

Where's the boy?

JAMAL

Search me. Right here, Maureen starts to look for him.

Onscreen, Maureen looks around in distress.

ELLA

There's no footage of Joey in the park
from before he went missing?

JAMAL

None that we found.

Ella scrolls through more videos. She notices the same
Parks and Rec van stop as Maureen runs into its path.
Another shot shows it continuing out of the park in the
background.

ELLA

Call Parks and Rec and ask who was
driving that van.

Xander notices someone walk through the park in the
background, backs up the footage, and hones in on it.

XANDER

Who does that looks like, coming into the
park? In the background, moving through
the trees... there.

He points. Ella looks at the image closer and closer.

ELLA

Shit. You may have a future with me yet.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Ella enters with a laptop.

ELLA

Is it okay if I come in and show you guys something?

Healing Deer wisely looks to Jordan, who smiles and nods.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Jordan, there's something we need you to help us figure out.

DR. HEALING DEER

But before we watch that, let me ask you this, Jordan, do you have many memories of when you were a small child?

JORDAN

Not really. Only one or two.

DR. HEALING DEER

I see. Well, you know, the brain is an astonishing tool. When babies or toddlers experience extreme trauma, their brain helps them by creating parts. This way, the excruciating memories are split between the parts, so it's more manageable. Plus, the parts that don't hold the memories can go on functioning. It's a miracle, really. Great defense.

ELLA

Unfortunately, some criminal groups have figured out how to create these parts intentionally. And also how to force some of the parts to work for them.

DR. HEALING DEER

So sometimes these parts do things that the core personality would never do, but it's not their fault.

She opens the laptop and hits "play".

ON THE LAPTOP:

Jordan walking into the park. She beckons to Joey, who follows her. Jordan frowns, confused.

ELLA

Now, you told us you weren't in the park Tuesday?

JORDAN

That's not me.

Ella shows her photo enlargements of her in the park.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Okay, it looks like me. But it must be from a different day.

DR. HEALING DEER

No, if you look at the date-stamp, it says April 7th, the day before yesterday. But I think I know why you cannot remember.

JORDAN

I don't understand. How could I not remember? I don't remember!

DR. HEALING DEER

I believe you. Jordan, what we just said about the brain creating parts? I think you might have a condition called Dissociative Identity Disorder, or D-I-D for short.

Jordan scowls, not believing him.

DR. HEALING DEER (CONT'D)

I believe there is a part of you who was in the park. But you - Jordan - as you sit here now, may not recall you were there.

JORDAN

No, no, no... I don't have that.

DR. HEALING DEER

Do you sometimes find yourself in a place but don't remember how you got there?

Jordan shakes her head, leans forward, and nervously pulls her knees up to her chest.

JORDAN

Can I go home now?

DR. HEALING DEER

In a short while. Please take a minute and close your eyes...

(MORE)

DR. HEALING DEER (CONT'D)
put yourself in your safe place... I want
to talk to the part of you who saw what
happened in the park.

Jordan closes her eyes and breathes slowly but doesn't
speak.

DR. HEALING DEER (CONT'D)
Would you come out, please?

Jordan rocks in her chair then looks into the two-way
mirror.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Mrs. Rowland sees Jordan staring into the two-way mirror.

MRS. ROWLAND
She knows we're watching.

XANDER
I don't think so.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Jordan still looks into the mirror, rocking. Her
reflection suddenly - transforms into LEO, 27, Korean -
muscular, confident, in a suit, with a husky voice.

JORDAN/LEO
Leave her alone. She doesn't know. It's
her job not to remember anything.

DR. HEALING DEER
Who am I speaking to?

JORDAN/LEO
Leo.

DR. HEALING DEER
And what is your role, Leo?

JORDAN/LEO
I protect Jordan and the others. If you
care about what happens to her, you'll
butt out.

Jordan's eyelids flutter. In a second - Leo is gone and
Jordan is back.

JORDAN
May I go to the bathroom?

DR. HEALING DEER

Of course.

Jordan gets up and leaves. Xander enters. Behind him, Mrs. Rowland pushes past and bursts in, visibly shaken.

MRS. ROWLAND

What have you done to my daughter?. She's acting so... so crazy weird.

DR. HEALING DEER

She's not crazy, but she does need treatment. She's developed parts within herself as a defense mechanism. That's a good thing, by the way.

MRS. ROWLAND

You don't really think she has... multiple personalities?

DR. HEALING DEER

Oh, I'm quite sure she has. But honestly, that's not the alarming part. It's a diagnosis which is highly treatable.

Mrs. Rowland, stunned, pulls a tissue from her purse to wipe her tears. Xander directs her to a chair.

MRS. ROWLAND

But... why would she become that way to start with?

DR. HEALING DEER

It's complicated. We have to look into it more, but typically it's considered a reaction to trauma.

MRS. ROWLAND

She hasn't had any trauma. And she's never mentioned any other personalities.

DR. HEALING DEER

Yes, well, the Jordan you interact with may not be aware of them. That's part of the defense, actually.

MRS. ROWLAND

I don't know. This just doesn't ring true to me. I want to take her home now.

DR. HEALING DEER

Of course, I understand. It's a lot to take in.

Mrs. Rowland rises, stiffly, and leaves.

XANDER

So, someone's been abusing Jordan?

ELLA

Looks like it. And we need to find out who. Whoever's mind programming Jordan could be the one behind Joey's disappearance.

DR. HEALING DEER

Hopefully we can persuade the alters to speak up.

XANDER

Assuming her mom still allows us access to her.

DR. HEALING DEER

I'll speak to Mrs. Rowland tomorrow. She'll need some time to process all this.

ELLA

We're a little short on that, Doc.

Xander sees Jordan left her purse, her phone sticking out of a pocket.

XANDER

This might help - cheat codes.

ELLA

Seriously? No. We do everything by the book.

DR. HEALING DEER

Jordan is more likely than not being abused in the present. That gives you a reason to stray from the book.

ELLA

I've seen cases thrown out of court for less than that.

XANDER

No one needs to know. Gimme five minutes. Keep them talking, and I'll drop it right back in her purse. Do you want this or not?

Ella frowns as Xander takes Jordan's phone and hurries out.

EXT. THE COMPOUND - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The dark woods surround the brooding structure.

INT. WHITE ROOM, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

A wooden trunk is in the center of the room. Silence.
And then the trunk shakes, from within.

Rosa climbs in through a tiny window with a flashlight,
looks around - and goes to the trunk.

She lifts the lid off to find Joey curled up inside, tied
with a rope, completely still.

ROSA

Good job. You're not crying.

Joey doesn't move. He's beyond crying. A huge spider is
about to crawl onto his face. Rosa, unafraid, puts her
hand out for it to crawl on, then places it back in the
trunk.

ROSA (CONT'D)

I can let you out for a bit if you
promise to stay quiet.

He nods. Rosa unties him. Joey frantically brushes down
his clothing, afraid of more spiders. Rubs his sore
wrists.

ROSA (CONT'D)

Did you get anything to eat?

Joey shakes his head. Rosa takes half a sandwich from
her pocket and offers it to him. Joey eats ravenously.

Lights flash in the hallway and shine underneath the
door. The two are frozen in terror when someone stops in
front of the closed door. A beat later, the footsteps
continue.

ROSA (CONT'D)

Did they hurt you?

Joey flinches and nods. Rosa hugs Joey and hands him a
red candy.

ROSA (CONT'D)

The red ones help the ouchies stop
hurting. They're magic.

Joey takes the candy, examines it.

JOEY
You're joking; it's a *Skittles*.

Rosa's expression turns serious.

ROSA
You can't let them know I got you out.

Rosa makes her way to the window.

JOEY
I won't tell them. Promise.

Joey watches Rosa climb out the window.

Terrified, alone again, Joey sticks his head out and looks up to see Rosa climbing the rusted fire escape up to the next floor. He looks down. Below him, the fire escape is broken, with a fifteen-foot drop to the bottom.

CHILDREN (V.O.)
You don't run away, and you never ever tell.

INT/EXT. WHITE ROOM, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Joey thinks a beat, starts to climb out, then stops. He goes back into the room.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Joey emerges head first out the window, carrying a sheet. Slowly and cautiously, he creeps down the fire escape. On the bottom rung of the fire escape, Joey ties the sheet in place. He looks down at the drop.

Sweating, terrified, he steels himself, clings to the swaying sheet. Slowly, he clambers to the bottom, still six feet above the lawn.

JORDAN (V.O.)
Being brave doesn't mean you're never scared.

Joey closes his eyes. Lets go.

EXT. GARDENS, THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Tumbling onto the lawn, Joey stares up for a moment at the building where he was held captive.

He tiptoes into the barn and lets the dog out. She barks, excited to see him. Joey, alarmed, tries to quiet her.

JOEY

Ssh! Shh!

Joey picks her up and runs like hell into the dark night.

EXT. GLEN PARK WOODS - NIGHT

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS in orange vests, some on horseback, search through the thick trees.

Xander and Ella push through them to meet Thompson at a well-stocked food table, where Maureen and her boyfriend CRAIG BERNARD, straight-laced, 30, talk to volunteers. Maureen sees Ella and instantly perks up.

MAUREEN

Tell me you have news?

ELLA

I'm sorry. Not yet.

MAUREEN

He's still out there. You know that, right?

ELLA

Of course.

MAUREEN

I feel useless here. Maybe there's somewhere else I could help better?

ELLA

Maureen, we need you here. When they see you, it makes the search very real.

Maureen hugs Ella. Ella holds on as long as Maureen needs to. Xander stops munching on a donut and watches them, then his face goes blank.

XANDER'S FLASHBACK

A YOUNG XANDER hugs his FOSTER MOTHER, 29, with both arms clinched around her neck.

Strong arms pull him away from her.

YOUNG XANDER

Nooooooo, I don't want to go.

Xander's mother has the saddest smile but says nothing.

END FLASHBACK

Xander snaps out of his memory as Maureen and Ella separate.

MAUREEN

I must have looked out of it last time we spoke, but I swear I'm clean, six years last December.

ELLA

No one doubts that, or you.

MAUREEN

And Mitch was a shit husband, but, uh... he would never hurt Joey.

Ella notices Chief Thompson, who bends over the map with Jamal and another OFFICER.

ELLA

Excuse me, I need to...

She points to Thompson and beelines that way.

THOMPSON

...and the pond?

OFFICER

Dragging it as we speak.

Thompson, still bent over, looks up at Ella.

THOMPSON

Officer D'Albora, this is Miss or Mrs...

ELLA

Agent Fernandes.

OFFICER

Yes, we found the stolen park van out on Route 81.

ELLA

Great. Our forensics guys will need to process it.

Thompson rises to his full, intimidating height.

THOMPSON

We got this.

XANDER

Because your guys outshine the finest
forensic unit in the world?

Chief Thompson is not thrilled.

THOMPSON

We're not the bodunk hillbillies you
think we are.

ELLA

That's not what we're suggesting--

THOMPSON

Then we can handle this.

Jamal takes Thompson's elbow, moves him away from the
agents.

JAMAL

They've got a point, boss.

THOMPSON

Fine. Do what you want.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Joey, scratched, bleeding, and exhausted, sits huddled
against a tree and hugs the dog. Tear tracks streak down
his dirty face like warpaint. His teeth chatter in the
cold.

The lights of a car approach on a nearby road.

JOEY

Hey, wait! I'm here! Wait!

Joey plunges into the brush running blindly to the light.
He just misses the car as it passes along a dirt road.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. LITTLE COMPTON, RI - POLICE STATION MEETING ROOM - DAY.

Ella walks in to find Xander.

ELLA

The lab got a return on the syringe in the van. Lorazepam.

XANDER

One of only three mass-market drugs unlikely to kill. Which leads me to hope he's alive. DNA?

ELLA

When it comes, I bet dollars to donuts it has Joey's tracers.

Xander nods.

XANDER

In the meantime, I found a deleted email on Jordan's phone from a user, MaxPXD. Sent encrypted, via a proxy server. I cross-referenced the email address with a profile on the dark web -

ELLA

Not that fucking FiveRockSpiders.com?

XANDER

I hate that site.

Xander holds out a thumb drive. Ella anxiously eyes him.

ELLA

What is it?

Ella goes to reach for it but Xander pulls it back.

XANDER

Let's just say... it's not for anyone with a weak stomach.

Xander extends it out again and Ella accepts it, tentatively inserting it into the computer.

Xander and Ella watch, the sounds and flashing imagery breaking Ella's resolve.

When it concludes, a visibly shaken Ella jerks the thumb drive out and walks out of the room.

XANDER (CONT'D)

Ella?

Xander runs after.

EXT. POND - NEAR THE BARN - DAY

Rebekah holds Tony under the water. He struggles but can't stand up or get away.

BENJAMIN

Okay, take him out.

A group of adults and children stand on the edge of the pond. Two of the children are soaked, all look scared.

Rebekah releases Tony, who staggers and collapses on the bank. Rafael lifts him by the feet, Benjamin slaps him, and he starts to come around.

He sputters, gasps for breath, gags and throws up some water.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Who let Joey out?

Benjamin looks at the group of terrified faces.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Okay. We'll just go one by one. You're up.

Benjamin points at SAVANNAH CASTILLE, 3, Rosa's sister. Rebekah beckons Savannah into the pond. Savannah steps forward, terrified but unquestioning.

ROSA

(screaming)

Okay, I did it. I did it!

Benjamin wags a finger at Rosa.

BENJAMIN

We don't believe you.

Rebekah pushes Savannah under the water. A tear rolls down Rosa's face.

ROSA

I did it, okay?! It was me!

Savannah is let out of the water.

REBEKAH

Okay Kinder, what are the rules?

They recite the rules.

REBEKAH & CHILDREN

You don't cry, you don't throw up, you don't say no, you don't run away, and you never ever tell.

BENJAMIN

Rosa is going to the Blue Room, to remind her to be more obedient.

The children encircle Rosa, the adults flanking them. They walk back to the house, Rosa is stoically silent.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Jordan and Dr. Healing Deer sit at the table. Jordan sees herself as Leo in the mirrored glass.

JORDAN/LEO

Doc, I'm disappointed in you. Jordan thinks you're a smart guy. You should know we can't talk.

DR. HEALING DEER

I know that's what they told you, but with whose interest at heart? What if I take you to a safe house?

JORDAN/LEO

They'll find out. The group is everywhere. We've seen them here.

DR. HEALING DEER

Here? Tell me who you've seen you know from the group?

JORDAN/LEO

I can't say, and can't tell you where Joey is, or Lisa will come out. Watch. He's being held...

Leo's eyes flutter and he transforms into Lisa.

JORDAN/LISA

Please don't make me tell. I am not allowed. I can't. I can't. I'll do whatever you want...

She runs her hands along Dr. Deer's legs. He pushes her hands aside, quickly stands, and moves away.

DR. HEALING DEER

No, no. It's okay, Lisa. You don't have to. May I talk to Leo again, please?

Reflected in the glass, Lisa turns and switches into Leo.

JORDAN/LEO

I can only tell you two words.
"unsharpened pencil".

DR. HEALING DEER

What does that mean? You're the protector, right, Leo?

JORDAN/LEO

You bet I am.

DR. HEALING DEER

Do you protect all children?

Leo nods.

DR. HEALING DEER (CONT'D)

What are you doing to protect Joey?

JORDAN/LEO

What are you doing to protect Jordan?
Don't you get it? They control her from within. If they can't reach her, she's trained to punish herself if she tells.
Right, Lisa?

Leo switches to Lisa, who wheels over to the wall and starts to bang her head.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Xander, Ella, and Mrs. Rowland watch Jordan bang her head on the wall. Healing Deer grabs a down jacket and tries to slip it between her head and the wall. Mrs. Rowland jumps up.

MRS. ROWLAND

Stop her! We need to end this right now!

She heads for the door but Ella grabs her arm and stops her. Mrs. Rowland glares daggers and tugs away from Ella.

MRS. ROWLAND (CONT'D)

Let go of me! I'm taking Jordan home and calling my attorney.

Mrs. Rowland grabs her phone and hits her contacts list.

ELLA

Well, tell her we can use "The Justice for Victims Act" in this case.

MRS. ROWLAND

What the hell is that?

ELLA

Mrs. Rowland, we have evidence that Jordan has been abused by a cult.

MRS. ROWLAND

That's ridiculous!

Ella pulls the flash drive out and heads to the computer.

MRS. ROWLAND (CONT'D)

She didn't even go to daycare, how would...

Angle on the computer screen: four-year-old Jordan is surrounded by several MEN, including JONATHAN ROWLAND, 35, a tall, fair-skinned man with a soothing voice. The men all wear masks. A large peacock painting hangs on the wall.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

Show us what a good girl does.

Close up on Mrs. Rowland. She turns and looks at the screen in abject horror. Ella looks at her and not the video.

JORDAN (V.O.)

Okay, Daddy.

Mrs. Rowland's face crumples in tears. Xander turns off the video. Ella goes to touch her arm, but she slaps her away, sobbing. Ella kneels next to her chair.

ELLA

I'm sorry you had to watch that.

MRS. ROWLAND

It can't be. It just can't be.

ELLA

I'm sorry. I take it you knew nothing of this?

MRS. ROWLAND

No. No, no, no. That son of a bitch!

XANDER

Forgive me, but I have to ask you, would you be willing to take a polygraph?

Mrs. Rowland nods, wipes her eyes with her sleeve, attempts to compose herself.

MRS. ROWLAND

Whatever you need.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Xander walks to the window, watches Jordan fighting Dr. Deer, as she tries to hit her head on the wall again.

EXT. LONELY ROAD - NIGHT

Joey walks along a deserted dirt roadway with the dog trotting ahead. A car comes around the curve, and headlights illuminate him. It pulls to a stop. Joey runs to the driver's door.

JOEY

I... I need you to call the police and my mom.

DRIVER

It's okay. I can take you to her. Hop in.

The DRIVER opens the door and eases himself out. He towers over Joey, who begins to back away. The dog emits a low growl.

Joey looks toward the passenger seat and sees ANOTHER MAN turned slightly toward him. Joey's eyes widen, terrified. The dog barks, guarding Joey. Joey stumbles backward into the woods near the dirt road.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Hey buddy... don't be scared...

Joey gets his bearings, turns, and darts away from the car into the trees with the dog running at his feet.

DIVER (CONT'D)

Hey kid. Kid?

(under his breath)

Goddammit.

He races after Joey, tripping, stumbling...

EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME

Joey dodges behind a boulder and sinks into the grass.

He hears the footsteps of the driver run past him, getting further and further away. Joey lets out a relieved breath. As things settle and everything becomes silent, Joey quietly weeps, the weight and terror of this all weighing further on him. He hugs the dog. Crack. Joey whips around.

JOEY

AHHH...

END OF PILOT

CAPTION CARD:

Ritual abuse has been disclosed by survivors from:

Every state in the USA

Every province in Canada

And over 30 other countries worldwide.

If you or someone you know has been affected, contact
<https://survivorship.org> or your local rape crisis
center.

FADE OUT.