

CHILDREN OF THE MARRIAGE

Written by

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ORIGINAL SERIES PILOT SCRIPT
ONE-HOUR DRAMA

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OVER BLACK:

WOMAN (V.O.)
When did it start?

AL (V.O.)
When they split up, I guess.

A piece of paper is loudly RIPPED.

EXT. RUGBY FIELD - DAY

An empty field covered in streamers, food wrappers and towels. Garbage blows gently in the wind.

A BLOODY RAG and BROKEN EYE-GLASSES lie in the grass.

WOMAN (V.O.)
And how long ago was that?

BRYAN (V.O.)
When I was little, I guess? I don't remember.

RRRIIIPPP -- another paper torn.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

In an empty classroom, two boxes labelled "VOTING BOOTH" lie knocked over on a table. Dozens of BALLOTS litter the floor.

WOMAN (V.O.)
And how does that feel?

EMMA (V.O.)
How do you think? Have you ever had your world suddenly ripped apart?

RRRRRRRRRIIIIIIIIIIPPPPPPPPPP. Poor tree.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LOCKERS - DAY

In an empty hallway -- a LOCKER hangs off its hinges, with books, paper, clothes and garbage strewn at its foot.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Would you say it had an impact on what happened today?

At the bottom of the locker, on top a textbook, is a small plastic bag of WHITE POWDER, stained with a drop of BLOOD.

RRRIIIPPP, RRRIIIPPP, RRRIIIPPP--

WOMAN (V.O.)

Al!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - COUNSELLOR OFFICE - DAY

ALEX "AL" WITIKERR (16, they/them) jolts to attention.

In loose-fitting, baggy clothes, Al tears a piece of paper and adds it to a growing pile atop a BLACK NOTEBOOK on their lap. Invisibility would be their chosen super power, not that they need it.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

Could you stop that, please?

Al sits on a chair across from the GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR (40s), the V.O. interrogator. She'd have made a great counsellor in the 90s. The current generation is proving a test of patience.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR (CONT'D)

You said it was your parents' fault.

AL

I said it was caused by my parents.
I didn't say it was their fault.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

But you said...
(flips through notes)
You said you didn't get to see your dad.

CUT BACK to the "hot seat"-- BRYAN PORTMAN (17, he/him) sits with crossed arms, replacing Al. He's well-built and unconsciously handsome, despite his muddy rugby kit and BLACK EYE. He scratches his nose -- BLOOD on his knuckles.

BRYAN

I said I was with my dad a few nights before. That's when he asked to come to the game.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

(re: blood)
Do you want to clean up, Bryan?

BRYAN

Nope.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

Has this kind of incident happened before? With your parents?

BRYAN

That's a bit personal.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

It might convince the principal.

EMMA (O.S.)

I think it's pretty clear what happened today.

CUT BACK -- now EMMA GENERO (16, she/her) is in the hot seat. Back straight, hands folded neatly, Emma is the paragon of a high-achieving student. She looks like a future president.

EMMA (CONT'D)

My parents had nothing to do with it.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

But hadn't they just told you they were getting a divorce?

EMMA

Separating.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

Pardon?

EMMA

They're separating. They're not getting a divorce.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

Sometimes kids think it's their fault, that their parents are splitting up. But that's not the case, Emma.

EMMA

Thanks. I've read that too.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

I'm just trying to figure out what happened.

Emma crosses her arms, reluctant to share more.

MATCH CUT -- Bryan examines his bloody knuckle, snorts.

MATCH CUT -- Al looks down at their notebook. The negative space between the ripped paper artfully shows BRYAN'S FACE.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

CLOSE ON EMMA:

EMMA

We must keep changing!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - ONE WEEK EARLIER - DAY

Emma, behind a podium on a raised stage, delivers a passionate speech. Like I said, she'll be president one day, but maybe not one with a squeaky-clean record.

EMMA

We now have gender-neutral washrooms. We started an anonymous bullying hotline. We created a speaker series to hear graduates discuss struggles with racism and sexism.

Moderate applause. A CROWD OF STUDENTS watches intently. The auditorium is well beyond its natural capacity.

Emma side-eyes her opponent, MANDY (16, she/her) at the opposite podium. Mandy rolls her eyes.

EMMA (CONT'D)

But I am not a president who rests on her laurels.

FIND Bryan in the audience. He sits next to AARON (17, he/him), a 200-pound brick wall of a young man who looks like he was born in a meat freezer. Also beside Bryan is KAIYA (16, she/her), his girlfriend and belle of the high school. She would point out how your Korean/Japanese tattoo is a mistranslation, but in a friendly way, and in private.

EMMA (CONT'D)

If given the privilege of a final term as president before I graduate--

FIND Al at the back of the gym. They watch Emma with an envious stare -- "I want to be like her." Despite the lack of space, Al somehow manages to find himself sitting alone.

The auditorium door catches their ear -- a teacher drags in ELIAS (17, he/him, very short, very goth). He shakes loose of their grip and makes towards Al.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It is my promise that I, Emma Genero, will create the school's first ever LGBTQ-plus Awareness Day.

Over half the audience erupts in loud applause.

Al watches everyone cheer, unresponsive himself. Elias grabs floor next to Al, who smiles in greeting, trying to get a smile back. But Elias plays it cool and stoic.

RANDOM STUDENT

We love you Emma!

ELIAS

(yelling at stage)
Get stuffed!

EMMA

(ignoring Elias)
I continue to encourage all students, from all grades, backgrounds, orientations and opinions, even the unpopular ones--
(looks to Mandy)
--to join the student council.
While summer is only a few weeks away, it is never too late to get involved and make a change at your school.

More applause. Al perks up at this last part.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Before you can vote, you need to be informed. So, I challenge my opponent to a debate next week, before the last rugby game of the season. Go Wasps!

Bryan, Aaron, Kaiya and the rest of the surrounding RUGBY TEAM cheer at their shout-out.

AARON

GO EMMA!

Emma offers a theatrical hand to Mandy-- a challenge.

MANDY

Uh, yes. I... accept.

Emma faces her audience, in the palm of her hand. She spots two WOMEN near the stage-- FRAN and DONNA (early 40s and early 50s, both she/her) stand together with encouraging smiles. They're both the height of bold, professional fashion, befitting flashy politicians or fancy lawyers.

EMMA

No matter the outcome, I promise to work with my opponent to make sure we have another memorable year.

The audience applauds with great enthusiasm.

Emma gives a final wave to the crowd as she steps off stage.

STEPHANIE (16, she/her, the friend who'd bring two shovels to help bury a body) waits for her with an excited grin, like a Chief of Staff welcoming their Head of State. They confer as privately as they can in the packed auditorium.

STEPHANIE

Nice touch with the rugby team.

EMMA

Thanks. I thought a little improvising couldn't hurt. Your idea to challenge her onstage really knocked them over though.

STEPHANIE

The look on Mandy's face! No one outside the student council knows that's been scheduled for weeks.

EMMA

Emma and Stephanie, re-elected Prez and Vee-Pee, twenty-twenty-two!

As they high-five, Fran and Donna approach from the crowd.

FRAN

Great work, you two. You wrote a great speech, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

Emma's the one who sold it.

DONNA

Looking presidential up there, Em.

EMMA

Thanks for coming, Mom and Mum.

Emma moves to hug her moms. But only Fran moves in. A beat of awkwardness as Emma separately embraces Donna while Fran watches. Stephanie watches, oblivious to any nuance.

DONNA

How about a little celebration lunch, you two?

EMMA

We've got to prepare for the debates.

FRAN

Take a break, Emma. You've been working hard all week.

EMMA

Fine, but if we lose the election and don't get into Harvard because of a bad resume, it's coming out of your paycheques.

The Moms laugh as they, Emma and Stephanie head into the massive crowd that is slowly bottle-necking its way out of the gym. They cut their way through the edge to get out fast.

Meanwhile, Al and Elias lumber on through the crowd.

ELIAS

Fakes.

AL

What?

ELIAS

Fakes. Both of them. That stuff about an LGBtenU2Q thing-- fake.

AL

I dunno. I believed her. You wanna go check out the student council meeting tomorrow?

ELIAS

(ignoring the question)
You wanna get a smoke?

AL

I was going to have lunch...

ELIAS

I don't do lunch. See ya.

Elias pushes through the crowd, leaving Al alone. He passes Bryan, Kaiya and Aaron, who lurch forward at the speed of molasses crawling uphill in January.

AARON

Why does she have to make things so political?

KAIYA

What do you mean?

AARON

Why does everything have to be
"awareness" this and "politically
correct" that? It's high school.

BRYAN

You were all over her a second ago.
I think she's your type.

Aaron playfully punches Bryan on the shoulder.

KAIYA

Hey, don't damage my goods!

Kaiya and Bryan share a kiss as they shuffle on.

Bryan senses something -- he turns. Al is there, and has been
staring for a while. But when they catch Bryan's eye--

Al quickly hides, disappearing into the crowd.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

A STREAM OF STUDENTS burst into the hallway. This school is
well over-capacity.

Al emerges and pushes into the guts of the middle-class high
school of typical decor -- lockers, classrooms, club posters,
school colours (cherry and grey), you know the drill. While
the students look bright, shiny and fashion-aware, the school
lags decades behind in taste and touch-ups.

Al ends up at their locker. With a few muscle-memorized
twists of the lock, they open it and grab a classic PAPER BAG
LUNCH and their BLACK NOTEBOOK.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

A greasy cafeteria hosts the regulars -- jocks, nerds, goths,
geeks, etc. A couple teachers monitor absently.

Al enters with lunch and notebook. They choose the emptiest
table and sit alone. They unpack their lunch -- a bologna
sandwich, an over-ripe banana, and soda crackers. Yum.

Appetite uninspired, Al observes the room:

A gaggle of POPULAR GIRLS gossip at a table. A MEAN GIRL
grabs a POOR GIRL's cellphone and taunts her over a message.

A troupe of CHESS PLAYERS hunch over boards. A brigade of BULLIES "bump" into their games, knocking pieces over.

A STERN TEACHER scolds a gang of MISFITS for smoking inside.

A horde of GOTHS sit around, sullen and melancholic.

Al sketches in their notebook-- a strikingly beautiful GOTH GIRL, languidly laid out on a table, too cool for school.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Whatcha drawin'?

RICHARD (16, he/him/jerk) a rugby player/weasel in the same kit as Bryan, looms over Al.

AL

...stuff.

RICHARD

What kinda stuff?

Al instinctively pulls their notebook a little closer -- Richard SNATCHES IT. He holds it upside down, squinting.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Hot. Can I have this? I wanna hang it in my locker.

Al says nothing. Richard is about to walk away when--

BRYAN (V.O.)

Give it back, Richard.

Bryan stops at the table with Kaiya and Aaron, witnesses to this clear bully scenario. Al blushes. Richard smirks.

RICHARD

Your new boyfriend, Al?

AARON

Stop being a dick, Dick.

Bryan stares Richard down. Bryan is tall, broad and intense, especially compared to the slightly slighter Richard. Richard shrugs and tosses the notebook at Al and--

RICHARD

Whatever.

--he flees.

KAIYA

(to Al)

Sorry about that. He's a jerk.

Al looks wide-eyed at Bryan.

AL

Do you want to have lunch with me?

BRYAN

Uh, thanks but we're already sitting somewhere else.

Bryan, Kaiya and Aaron move on. Al sketches fleetingly--

-- a rough of Bryan's face.

MOVE WITH: Bryan, Kaiya and Aaron grab a seat with the rest of the rugby team. They all unpack massive meat sandwiches and protein shakes, while Kaiya helps herself to a little bento box she prepared that morning.

AARON

Who else is going to that post-graduation thing before practice?

A few murmurs and nods of affirmation. But Bryan says nothing. Kaiya gives him a playful elbow.

KAIYA

We're going to pick out some colleges, right?

AARON

There's no college good enough for, Mr. Future Rugby Star.

Kaiya gives Bryan a look.

BRYAN

Coach said a scout is coming to our first playoff game if we make it. They might be looking for players for the national training camp.

AARON

And apparently they specifically asked about Bryan. Just don't forget us little guys when you're at the World Cup.

KAIYA

(to Bryan)

Why didn't you tell me?

BRYAN

I didn't want to make a big deal about it. It might be nothing.

KAIYA

Well, I'm still going to look for some colleges. You should come too.

BRYAN

Maybe.

KAIYA

And what about me when you're all rich and famous?

BRYAN

I'll still need a feminist groupie slash cheerleader.

Aaron laughs. Kaiya rolls her eyes with a smile.

PRE-LAP BELL RINGING. CUT TO--

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A GRUMPY HISTORY TEACHER stands in front of the class.

HISTORY TEACHER

Settle down, everyone. I'm passing around the notes you prepared on the Russian Revolution. We're going to go over them as a class.

Al, sitting at the front, smiles widely at the Teacher. He does not return their enthusiasm.

The teacher hands out packets of notes. Al takes one.

INSERT ON PAGE: "*The Russian Revolution and Vladimir Lenin*". Al smiles, proud of their work.

SNIGGERING from behind. Al turns to see -- MEAN BOYFRIEND and MEAN GIRLFRIEND (both 16), both with those "you're so embarrassing" grins.

Boyfriend whispers something disparaging (re: Al) to Girlfriend. He affectionately interlaces his hand with hers. She nuzzles his neck. A mean couple, but clearly in love.

HISTORY TEACHER (CONT'D)

Remember to spell check your work, please. It's Vladimir "Lenin", not Vladimir from the Beatles.

On the board, the teacher writes "Lenin", then "Lennon" and crosses it out. They look at Al directly; the class titters.

Off Al's crestfallen look--

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Students FILL the halls once more. Shoulders, arms, backpacks and hormones sardine together like a Tokyo subway.

SCHOOL P.A.

Have a good weekend, everyone! Next week is the student council president debates and the final regular season game for our Wasps!

Al sulks down the hall. MEAN COUPLE LAUGH as they pass by.

MEAN GIRLFRIEND

Vladimir Lennon and Paul McTrotsky!

Al gets to their locker. They tiredly turn the lock when-- suddenly, they violently SLAM their head against the door.

Down the hall, Al spots Bryan. He pulls out a large duffle bag from his locker.

BRYAN'S POV -- he loads his already-packed duffle with some books and homework. From his pocket, he pulls out a wad of pamphlets for college programs. He considers them for a second, then chucks them into his locker.

When he shuts the locker door -- Al is there. While shy, they still manage an inquisitive and springy demeanor.

AL

No one else brings a duffle bag to school. What's it for?

BRYAN

It's... an overnight bag.

AL

For your girlfriend's place?

KAIYA (O.S.)

Hey Bryan--

Kaiya appears behind Al. Al goes rigid at the sight of her.

AL

(to Bryan)

Thank you for before!

Al scurries away.

KAIYA

What was that about?

Bryan shrugs. He kisses her and they head off, hand-in-hand.

EXT. RUGBY FIELD - DAY

COACH

Set. Lock. ENGAGE.

TWO RUGBY TEAMS engage in a SCRUM.

The ball is kicked out; Bryan receives it. His team spreads out to take the play.

Aaron blocks a player rushing Bryan. Bryan dekes out another. The half-back, Richard (the jerk-weasel), runs along side.

BRYAN

Left, left!

On the sidelines, PARENTS watch, including Bryan's Mom DEBRA (40s she/her), and his step-father TONY (50s he/him). Tony is a Wall Street type; Debra, a homemaker with a bank account.

Bryan tosses the ball to Richard who runs into the end for a try. Bryan's side cheers and celebrates.

COACH

Good run, everyone! Great play,
Bryan. Bring it in!

The team hustles in and surrounds the COACH (50s).

Kaiya joins Debra and Tony, greeting them with a hug.

COACH (CONT'D)

Get a good rest this weekend. One
more practice before the game.
Playoffs if we win. One, two--

TEAM

WASPS!

The team disbands. Players meet up with their parents. Bryan finds Debra, Tony and Kaiya.

DEBRA

Bry, you were so good!

BRYAN

Thanks, Mom.

TONY

You guys are going to kick butt.

DEBRA

How did that career seminar go? Did you find anything neat?

Bryan gives Kaiya a look -- a shared secret.

BRYAN

Uh... yeah. Found some things.

TONY

Oh yeah? Like what?

Bryan fidgets. He appears restless for something. Kaiya sees.

KAIYA

Hey-- can I call you later tonight?

BRYAN

Sure, I'll text you.

DEBRA

And we'll see you on Sunday for dinner? I invited Kaiya too.

BRYAN

Yeah, definitely.

A NOSEY PARENT steps over.

NOSEY PARENT

Hey, Bryan. Just wanted to say you played great today. Your mom and dad must be very proud.

Debra and Tony say nothing, politely smiling at the parent.

BRYAN

Thanks. My mom and step-dad are very supportive.

NOSEY PARENT

Oh, sorry.
(to Debra and Tony)
You've got a great kid.

Needing to break the moment, Bryan grabs his nearby duffle and backpack. Mud and dirt from his kit rub onto the bags.

DEBRA

You sure you don't want to come by the house to shower first?

BRYAN

I'll just shower there. See you
guys Sunday.

Bryan gives Kaiya a last kiss before parting ways with them.

As Bryan splits from his family, Aaron jogs up next to him.

AARON

Hey, man -- you wanna go to
Jarred's? I think he got a kegger
from his uncle.

BRYAN

It's Friday.

AARON

Oh yeah -- right. Sorry, man. Say
hi to Jack for me.

BRYAN

I will. Have fun at the party.

AARON

Always do without you!

Aaron gets a playful shove, as he heads off toward his
mother, father and little sister.

Bryan sees his other team mates get into cars with their
mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers as singular, happy
family units, like animals loading onto Noah's ark.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Outside a small bungalow, Bryan pulls keys out of his duffle,
unlocks the door and heads inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Bryan silently enters the house. It's austerely decorated,
not much design, color or decor. He heads down a hallway to a
door. He opens it into --

INT. HOUSE - BRYAN'S ROOM - DAY

Bryan enters his room. Athlete posters, some books, sports
memorabilia, a few trophies. It feels like a normal
teenager's room but sparse, like in the middle of a move.

Bryan sets his bags down and falls on the bed.

He lets out a deep breath. Finally, he smiles.

INT. BRYAN'S DAD'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryan, in a big lazy-boy chair, watches FOOTBALL on TV, looking relaxed. He perks up at the sound of a DOOR OPENING.

Enter JACK (late 40s) in a paramedic uniform, a few bags of groceries in hand.

BRYAN

Hey, Dad.

JACK

Hey, buddy. What's on?

BRYAN

Just the game. I ordered Chinese.

JACK

Thank baby Jesus. I'm starving.
What's the score?

BRYAN

Twenty-one all.

Jack disappears down the hall. Bryan watches him go.

Jack returns moments later, still in uniform, with his DINNER. He flops down on the couch next to Bryan.

JACK

How was practice?

BRYAN

Good. Feeling a bit off on my
handling, though.

JACK

We can work on that this weekend.
How you feeling about your next
game? The scout and all?

BRYAN

"Put me in, coach. Ready to play."

JACK

Your mom say anything about it?

BRYAN

She said a sports scholarship for
university is a better idea.

JACK

And she's not wrong, Bryan. It's
just not the only path.

A long beat as Father and Son watch the game together, content with the moment's silence.

EXT. AL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Establish Al's apartment building in a lower-class area.

INT. AL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - AL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Al sketches in their notebook, next to a pile of uncompleted homework, neatly arranged however.

Surrealist, Jodorovsky, and Gieger-like art covers Al's room. Some mind-bendingly beautiful, others violent and cruel. The room itself is small: a bed, a desk.

Their mother, ROSE-MARIE (39) knocks and enters. She's dressed to the nines, if that nine was twenty-nine.

ROSE-MARIE

I'm out! I left some movies in the living room.

AL

I thought you said we were going to watch one before you left?

ROSE-MARIE

Sorry, hunny. Got busy getting ready. Tomorrow, I promise.

(then)

Oh, your Father called. He "might" be in town on Wednesday if you wanted to see him.

AL

What? Really? Yes! Please!

ROSE-MARIE

Don't get your hopes up, hunny. You know how he is.

AL

He's just busy!

ROSE-MARIE

We'll talk later. I've gotta go.

AL

Can Elias come over?

ROSE-MARIE

Sure. But do you want to wear something a bit more... fitting?

Al looks at their clothes -- what's the problem?

ROSE-MARIE (CONT'D)
Never mind. Bye, hunny.

Rose-Marie leaves. On the wall, Al looks at a photograph--
their FATHER and them as an infant.

EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emma's upper, upper middle class home.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Emma writes. She puts her pen in her mouth, chewing over what
she just wrote. She grabs her work and heads into--

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

If the rich shout and the wealthy whisper, Emma's home is a
gentle breath on the earlobe, the wrinkle-less, minimalist
chic of white-collar professionals. Emma enters.

EMMA
Hey, Mom, can you check this
argument I'm preparing?

But Fran and Donna are on the couch, like they're expecting
her. Emma's younger sister REBECCA (6) sits with them.

DONNA
Emma, we have something we need to
talk about. As a family.

Emma detects the severity.

EMMA
Okay. What's going on?

FRAN
You sure you don't want to sit, Em?

EMMA
No-- What's going on?

Donna and Fran exchange looks -- this is going to be hard.

DONNA
Your mother and I are separating.

Emma gives them a big, blank, fearful stare.

END OF ACT ONE