

EMOTIVE

Written by

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BLACK.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Open your eyes, Daddy.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

CLOSE on a pair of hands, covering eyes.

The hands move away, revealing JOE (30s). He mouths "boo" and pulls a face. ROBERT (3) sits on the floor across from him. The boy squeals with laughter.

Joe's wife, MARIE (30s), sits in a chair, watching them. Her face is blank. Completely expressionless.

Joe quickly puts his fingers to his lips, indicating for Robert to be quiet. Robert copies the motion. Joe stifles a laugh himself. He looks towards Marie. No change.

Not even a flicker of emotion.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK CORRIDOR - EVENING

Two officials in suits - RAMIRO and MILES march down the corridor, blank faced but purposeful. Some apartment doors are open; TENANTS watch blankly as the men pass by.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Joe draws a house in the dust on the floor using his finger. Robert smiles, fascinated.

BANG-BANG-BANG.

Joe looks towards the apartment door, then quickly erases the picture with his hand, scattering dust around. He indicates to Robert to be quiet again; the boy seems to appreciate the fear in his father's eyes.

Joe motions towards the corner of the room. Robert goes and sits there, tucked away, as Joe sits beside his wife.

BANG-BANG-BANG.

Marie gets up. Joe reaches out to stop her, but she carries on towards the door. Robert shuffles closer to his father.

Without a word Marie lets the Officials in to the apartment.

Miles remains by the door as Ramiro moves to the middle of the apartment. Robert cowers as Ramiro approaches.

RAMIRO

Following reports of activity  
contravening the laws of  
expression, this child has been  
selected for reconditioning.

Ramiro moves towards Robert, takes hold of his arm, drags him  
towards the apartment door.

Robert cries out.

Joe stands, takes a step towards them, but Marie raises a  
hand, taps him gently, stops him. He sits back down as  
Marie's arm falls back to her side.

Ramiro and Miles walk out of the apartment. The door closes  
behind them.

Joe turns to look at Marie. She's blank. A slight tear stain  
on her cheek. Anger floods Joe's face.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK CORRIDOR - EVENING

Ramiro carries a crying Robert.

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS, off screen, coming closer.

JOE (O.S.)

Robert!

Ramiro and Miles stop walking.

ROBERT

Daddy!

The boy wriggles, tries to get free from Ramiro.

RAMIRO

You need to go back to your  
apartment, sir.

JOE

Run. Now.

Robert gets out of Ramiro's arms, tumbles to the floor.  
Ramiro bends to try to grab at him.

Joe launches at Ramiro, knocks him down, away from Robert.

JOE (CONT'D)

Run!

Robert runs. Miles goes for him, but Joe grabs his leg, pulls  
him to floor as well.

Joe scrambles up, kicks away the writhing arms of the two  
officials. He runs after Robert.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - EVENING

Joe bursts through a door to the outside, pulling Robert by the hand. They look around. A large trash container to the side. He hoists open the lid, looks inside, just as --

The door opens again. Ramiro steps out.

Joe pulls Robert in to the doorway of a building, away from Ramiro's gaze. He tries the door. It opens.

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Dark inside. Joe fumbles at the door, puts a lock in place.

He peels a blind away from a window, peers outside. Ramiro and Miles are out there, looking for them.

Joe looks around. Robert's gone.

Panic.

Then he sees him in the darkness, hiding underneath a table. Joe goes to him, holds his arms out. The boy doesn't move.

JOE  
Scared, huh?

Robert shakes his head: no.

JOE (CONT'D)  
You're braver than me, then.

The front door RATTLES LOUDLY as the handle is tried from the outside. Joe stares. But the door remains closed.

Robert crawls out from under the table, into Joe's arms.

ROBERT  
Not be scared, Daddy.

JOE  
We're allowed to be.

Robert shakes his head again: no. A moment of silence.

ROBERT  
Where's Mommy?

JOE  
Mommy's not scared enough.

INT. BUILDING - MORNING

Joe looks out of the window, the rising sun glows red on his face. Robert sleeps on the floor nearby.

Out of the window, OFFICIALS trawl around the area. Searching. A couple head towards the building.

Joe scoops Robert from the ground. The boy rubs his eyes.

JOE  
We have to go.

EXT. BUILDING - MORNING

Joe carries Robert around the back of the building. Trees and a river on one side of them, buildings on the other. They peer around a corner. Officials are still out there. One peers in to the house Joe and Robert have just left.

Joe turns away from the building, heads towards the trees.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

The dying embers of a small fire. Joe sits, Robert on his lap, arms wrapped tightly around him.

ROBERT  
I'm hungry.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

The store is bland. Lifeless. No advertising, no gimmicks.

A SMASH of glass.

A bloodied hand reaches through a broken pane in the shop door, pulls back the lock. The door opens. Joe steps inside, scans the room as he wipes the blood from his hand. Sure it's safe, he lets Robert through.

Robert sees a tray of bananas, heads straight for them.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Joe and Robert sit beneath a checkout. Robert hands Joe the empty banana peel.

ROBERT  
Finished.

JOE  
Wait here. I mean it.

Joe climbs out from under the checkout.

He walks around the shelves, putting various foods in his pockets.

VOICES come from the store door.

Joe looks to the door, then towards where Robert's hiding - the boy's too far away for him to get to in a hurry.

The door opens. Two women - ALEXA and SARA (both late 20s) - step inside. Shoes CRUNCH on broken glass. Alexa aims a torch at the glass by her feet. Sara holds a baseball bat.

Joe ducks down, hurries to the side of the aisle.

Alexa lifts the torch at the sound, catches Joe in the beam as he ducks behind a counter. Sara raises her bat.

ALEXA  
Who are you?

Beat. Sara raises the bat higher.

SARA  
Come out.

Joe moves further in to view.

ALEXA  
Who are you?

ROBERT (O.S.)  
Daddy?

The women whirl around. Robert stands by the checkout, near them. They see the boy, relax a little; the bat gets lowered.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - NIGHT

Alexa and Sara enter a darkened house.

DAVID (late 20s) walks over to join them, kisses Sara on the cheek. PAUL (early 30s) hovers in the background.

DAVID  
I wondered where you'd got to.

As the women move further in to the room, Joe and Robert walk in behind them.

Paul practically leaps out of the darkness at them.

PAUL  
Who are you?

Alexa steps in Paul's way.

ALEXA  
This here's Joe, and his boy,  
Robert.  
(MORE)

ALEXA (CONT'D)

(beat)

They're just like us.

David sizes them up for a moment, then shakes Joe's hand.

DAVID

David. You've already met Alexa and Sara. This is Paul.

Joe holds his hand out to Paul. Paul ignores it.

GRACE (3) pokes her head from behind Sara's legs.

ALEXA

And that there's Grace.

Grace smiles shyly at Robert. He looks up at Joe, unsure what to do. Joe holds him close to his side. Grace tucks herself away again.

JOE

What do you mean, we're just like you?

ALEXA

You're safe now.

Robert slides from Joe's grip, edges towards Grace.

JOE

Come back here, Robert.

The boy ignores him.

ALEXA

He's fine.

JOE

(more firmly)

Robert.

But Robert takes no notice. He peers around Sara's legs, looks at Grace. She pokes her head out, sees him. Hides. Looks again. Hides again. The two children laugh.

Joe smiles despite himself. He sees Alexa looking at him. The smile quickly disappears.

ALEXA

You don't have to hide that anymore. We're all just like you.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - LATER

The adults are seated on the floor, passing around a bowl of food, which they scoop on to individual plates.

The two children run around, chasing each other, laughing.  
Joe watches them nervously.

ALEXA

Don't worry. No one can hear them.

David bashes one of the walls. It lets out a hollow THUD.

DAVID

Completely sound-proofed. Outside  
of these few rooms, no one can hear  
a thing going on in here.

The food bowl gets to Joe. He scoops some on to his plate,  
gets some for Robert.

Paul watches; a glare on his face.

JOE

Robert, come and eat.

He's ignored.

SARA

Let them play. I don't expect he's  
used to it.

JOE

I tried, but it was never easy.

Joe tastes a mouthful of his food.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's good. Thank you.

Paul throws down his bowl as though in disgust. He gets up,  
walks away. Joe and Alexa watch him go.

JOE (CONT'D)

So none of you have been - ?

ALEXA

Conditioned? Sure. We all have.

David comes over and sits beside Joe.

DAVID

It just doesn't stick for some  
folks. I'm guessing you're the  
same? They tried it on you?

JOE

Twice. Then they came for my boy.

DAVID

You did the right thing getting  
yourselves away from them.

ALEXA

Does he have a mother?

JOE

Yes.

ALEXA

Conditioned?

Robert wanders over to Joe, sits beside him, rests his head in his Dad's lap.

JOE

Thank you for the food. But we'd better get going.

ALEXA

Where are you going to go?

JOE

Don't worry about us.

ALEXA

Stay here.

Paul fires her a glare from where he's lurking in the background. It doesn't go unnoticed by Joe.

JOE

I don't want to cause any trouble.

Joe strokes Robert's hair as his son drifts off to sleep.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe lays on a mattress on the floor, Robert tucked under a blanket with him. The others lay on their own mattresses. All are asleep, except Alexa and Paul, who stand to the side whispering argumentatively.

Joe's eyes open, but he remains still, listening.

PAUL

They need to go. There's barely room for us --

ALEXA

They can sleep in my space.

PAUL

We can't have another child in here. Not a boy.

ALEXA

They need help, and we're going to help them. You above all people should appreciate that.

They glare at each other for a long moment. Paul skulks away. Alexa lays down on her own mattress. Joe closes his eyes.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - MORNING

The building seems somehow lighter. The group are huddled around a table, eating breakfast.

Joe joins them, leaving Robert asleep on the floor.

ALEXA  
(indicating to Robert)  
How is he?

JOE  
Exhausted. We both are.

ALEXA  
Coffee?

JOE  
Please.

Alexa pours him a cup.

JOE (CONT'D)  
I couldn't help but overhear your conversation with Paul last night. If we're any trouble --

ALEXA  
You're not.

JOE  
I don't want to put you all in any danger.

ALEXA  
They took his boy. The same as they tried to do with you. He never made it through reconditioning.

Joe looks over to Robert. He's sitting up, rubbing his eyes.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
Daddy?

JOE  
Morning, buddy. Come and get some breakfast.

Robert joins them at the table.

ALEXA  
Trust me. There's no way they can find us here on their own.

Joe watches Robert tuck in to a bowl of cereal. Robert sees him looking, pulls a face at his Dad. Joe can't help but smile.

Paul watches from the other end of the table.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Joe and Alexa scurry through some tall crops. They keep low, but move quickly.

Eventually Alexa indicates for them to stop. They start pulling corn from the ground, stuffing bags full.

JOE

Why were you at the store last night?

ALEXA

Same reason as you were. Same reason we're out here.

JOE

I had no choice.

ALEXA

Did you ever used to go to a store?

JOE

Marie would...

His sentence trails away as his mind wanders.

ALEXA

They can sense it - the Normals, I mean - they can tell when you're like us.

Joe laughs quietly to himself. Alexa straightens up, wipes sweat from her forehead and watches him.

ALEXA (CONT'D)

What is it?

JOE

(like he's quoting)  
"Emotions lead to inefficiency".

SARA

Sure they do.

EXT. SAFEHOUSE - DAY

Joe and Alexa head cautiously towards the safehouse, loaded with full bags of crops.

As they approach, the door flies open. Sara stands in the doorway, pacing, chewing her fingernails.

ALEXA  
What's wrong?

Sara doesn't say anything. Alexa and Joe step inside.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As their eyes adjust to the gloom of the building once more, they see --

Paul sits with a scared looking Robert on his lap.

JOE  
Everything okay, buddy?

Robert shakes his head, no, holds his arms out for Joe to take him. Paul holds him back, shoots a warning look at Joe.

PAUL  
You need to leave.

JOE  
Fine. I'll take Robert and leave.  
Just let him go.

PAUL  
You're putting us all in danger  
being here.

JOE  
I've said we'll leave.

ALEXA  
He needs our help, Paul. They both  
do.

PAUL  
None of us are safe anymore --

THWACK. Sara stands behind Paul, holding a baseball bat. Paul crumples to the ground. Joe rushes forward, grabs a crying Robert, pulls him in to his arms, trying to soothe him.

BANG-BANG-BANG.

Silence from the group as they turn to face the door.

BANG-BANG-BANG.

Alexa and Joe share a look.

JOE  
I'm sorry.

ALEXA  
Come with me.

She leads Joe and Robert to the back of the room. A rug covers the floor. She pulls it aside. A trapdoor underneath. Between them, they open it.

BANG-BANG-BANG. CRACK. The door to the building is being SMASHED in.

Under the trapdoor is a narrow space, just enough room to lay down.

ALEXA (CONT'D)  
Get in.

JOE  
There's not room for everyone.

ALEXA  
We'll be fine.

They share another look.

Joe gets in, brings Robert with him. They lay down. Paul's face appears above them. They cower away from him.

Paul holds Grace over the trapdoor.

PAUL  
Take her.

Joe takes hold of the girl, brings her down to them. Paul and Joe exchange a look as Paul closes the trapdoor.

Dust falls between the boards of the trapdoor as the rug is placed over the top.

Darkness.

ROBERT  
Daddy?

JOE  
Ssh. I'm here. I'm here.

Silence.

CRASH! Sounds of a SCUFFLE, RUNNING FEET, DOOR OPENING and CLOSING. Then further silence.

A BRIGHT LIGHT -- the trapdoor is thrust open -- hands reach down, grab Robert -- he SCREAMS --

Joe tries to reach him, tries to get out of the space, tries to get him back --

Grace cowers in the corner -- SCREAMS --

More arms reach down, grab at Joe. Someone's body blocks the light coming through the trapdoor --

Black.

Long beat.

RAMIRO (V.O.)  
Open your eyes.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Joe blinks his eyes in to focus. He sits on a chair in a bright, white room.

Ramiro stands in front of him, crouched at eye-level.

Joe stares straight ahead. Glazed expression.

RAMIRO  
Again.

He holds up photographs for Joe to look at, each time waiting for Joe to tell him what they are. Joe does so in a flat tone.

JOE  
Beach. Storm. Penguin. Sunset.  
House. Rose.

Ramiro shows him a photograph of Marie.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Woman.

And a photo of Robert.

Beat.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Boy.

RAMIRO  
Again?

JOE  
Boy.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

A small private cinema. Joe sits watching the screen, Ramiro beside him, watching him carefully.

"It's a Wonderful Life" plays on the screen.

GEORGE BAILEY (ON SCREEN)

I don't care what happens to me -  
get me back to my wife and kids.  
Help me, Clarence. Please.

Ramiro places a finger to the edge of Joe's eye, rubs his fingertips together. Joe doesn't even flinch.

RAMIRO

Good.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Joe sits in the chair again, Ramiro in front of him. He looks bashed around, his hair in disarray, bruises on his face.

Ramiro punches him square in the face. Joe doesn't move. Ramiro slaps him. No response. Harder. Nothing.

RAMIRO

Good.

INT. JOE'S CELL - NIGHT

A small bed, a chair and a bare desk.

Joe lays asleep on the bed, on his back, perfectly still.

A hand shakes Joe, tries to wake him. Eventually he stirs. Looks up.

Alexa stands over him. He looks at her, emotionless.

Alexa puts a finger to her lips, takes Joe's elbow and pulls him out of bed, leads him to the door. She looks around before stepping out of the room with Joe into --

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

A long corridor, lined with similar, closed, doors.

Alexa pulls Joe along the corridor. She opens every door as they walk along.

As Alexa and Joe continue along the corridor, faces of RECONDITIONEES appear in their cell doorways, staring blankly after the pair.

EXT. RECONDITIONING CENTRE - MOMENTS LATER

A large steel door within a large steel wall opens slowly. Alexa steps outside and pulls Joe with her.

She looks around. In front of them is a large open space. Behind them, the centre. There's nowhere to go but forward.

ALEXA  
We have to move. Quickly.

She drags Joe forward, trying to make him move, fast. Joe robotically moves his feet but seems in no hurry.

ALEXA (CONT'D)  
Come on. Please.

A BRIGHT LIGHT shines down on them, blinding, casting harsh shadows on the ground.

VOICE  
(over loudspeaker)  
Stay where you are.

Alexa breaks in to a run, dragging Joe along. The spotlight follows.

A GUNSHOT rings out. The ground in front of them explodes. Joe doesn't react, but Alexa digs her heels in to the ground, halts immediately.

VOICE (CONT'D)  
Do not move. Assistance is on the way.

ALEXA  
Assistance?

Alexa shields her eyes against the spotlight, peers back towards the centre. Joe continues facing the direction in which they were heading.

A FIGURE walks towards them from the centre.

As the figure approaches, we see it's Ramiro. He holds a gun by his side.

RAMIRO  
It will be in his best interests to come back with us.

ALEXA  
Why is that?

RAMIRO  
Because it's the only way he'll ever see his son again.

Ramiro steps to the side, revealing Sara standing behind him, holding Robert. The boy looks blankly towards Alexa, and his Dad's back.

ALEXA  
(to Sara)  
You did this?

SARA  
There were getting to be too many  
of you. Too much emotion in any one  
place is a dangerous thing.

Ramiro sneers slightly.

ALEXA  
You're smiling. Expressing emotion.

Ramiro's face blanks.

RAMIRO  
Emotions lead to inefficiency.

ALEXA  
No. They really don't.

RAMIRO  
Reconditioned, they have a chance  
of staying together. But if his  
Father runs, there's no chance.

The RECONDITIONEES Alexa set free appear behind Ramiro, barely silhouettes through the glare of the spotlight. The Voice can be heard in the background, repeatedly warning:

VOICE  
Stay where you are. Assistance is  
on the way.

Robert blinks a couple of times, stares towards Joe. He frowns.

ROBERT  
Daddy?

Joe's face is blank.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Daddy?

Joe twitches.

Alexa slides her hand into Joe's, entwining his fingers with hers. Joe looks down at their hands joined together. Frowns.

He looks over his shoulder towards the boy.

Robert sees Joe's face. Suddenly he's alive again. He wriggles, squirms, pulls himself free from Sara. Runs towards Joe.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Daddy!

Joe turns to face Robert. He crouches as the boy comes level with him. They look each other straight in the face.

Ramiro heads towards the pair, arm outstretched, gun pointing in their direction.

RAMIRO

Stay where you are.

Alexa blocks his path. They dance around each other for a moment.

The other Reconditionees move in towards them. Ramiro sees them approaching, backs off a little, but points his gun in their direction.

A group of OFFICIALS - including Miles - advances towards the Reconditionees, all armed, all ready to fulfil their duties without emotion. They round up the Reconditionees, who go with them without protest, though they turn and watch Joe and Robert with interest as they're lead away.

Miles hangs back, stands close by Ramiro. They, too, watch the interaction.

Joe looks at Robert with barely a hint of recognition, but frowns, unsure about something.

Robert copies the frown, mocking his Dad.

Joe smiles slightly.

Robert beams with delight, pulls a face.

Joe's eyes open wide. The smile spreads from ear to ear.

JOE

Robert?

ROBERT

Daddy!

Joe grabs him, pulls him tightly against him. Tears pour from his eyes. He weeps with absolute, overflowing joy.

Ramiro pokes at his eye. Rubs his fingertips together. He frowns at the moisture on his skin.

RAMIRO

No.

MILES

Sir?

Ramiro turn to face Miles. Ramiro's eyes are full of tears.

MILES (CONT'D)

Sir, you're going to have to come  
with me.

RAMIRO

No.

He backs away from Miles, waves the gun at him. The tears are  
flowing full force now.

MILES

You must submit for reconditioning.

Ramiro wipes his eyes with the back of his hand. He looks  
across at Joe and Robert, who are crouched on the ground,  
arms wrapped around one another. Alexa stands close by.

RAMIRO

No.

MILES

Sir?

RAMIRO

No.

He lifts the gun to his head.

He catches Joe's eye. Holds his gaze.

BLACK.