

The Orphan
Daniel Sides

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SCENE 1

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Esther HUMS O.S. Her black velvet ribbons have been removed and laid out in a row on the counter. CAMERA MOVES to the bathtub, where Esther is taking a bath. The water is faintly red. She's scrubbing under her fingernails. Humming pleasantly to herself.

And now we see what the ribbons have been covering: she has thick, knotted scars all the way around her neck and wrists.

INT. JOHN'S DEN - NIGHT

John sits on his desk, eyeing Daniel wearily.

JOHN
Esther and Max? You saw them?

DANIEL
Uh-huh.

JOHN
The tree house is still locked.

DANIEL
Esther had the keys.

JOHN
You mean these keys here?

He goes over to the keepsake chest and opens it. The KEY RING is there. He holds it up. Daniel flusters.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You're not lying to get them in trouble, are you?

DANIEL
No, I swear!

JOHN
(sighs, exasperated)
I don't know what's got into you lately. Just go to your room.

Daniel leaves, dejected...

SCENE 2

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max's eyes are red from crying. She's drawing a picture, but hides it under some other papers when Daniel enters. He closes the door. Esther's HUMMING can be heard O.S. A tense beat.

DANIEL
Are you okay?

Max nods. Daniel sits down next to her. He lowers his voice.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Did Esther do something to the van?

Max turns away and shakes her head.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
It's okay. You can tell me. I saw her jump out before it started to roll.

Max give him a startled look, suddenly frightened.

MAX
DID YOU TELL ON HER?

DANIEL
No way. Dad won't believe me. You have to do it with me.

Max shakes her head and starts signing, but Daniel can't keep up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Slow down, I don't understand. Did she make the van crash?

A long beat. Max reluctantly nods.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Then we have to tell Mom and Dad.

Max starts crying. She signs, but Daniel doesn't understand. Frustrated, Max starts hitting him. Daniel grabs her arms.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Stop it! She's going to kiss us if we don't tell! Mom and Dad can protect us!

Max shakes her head. Daniel releases her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Why not?

MAX

NOBODY CAN.

Daniel stops short. Max hesitates, then gets up and shows him the pictures that she hid from him when he first came in.

They're crude crayon drawings of Max and Esther. In the first, Esther stands atop the rocket ship slide and pushes Brenda down the stairs while Max watches.

The next one turns Daniel's blood cold. It's of Sister Abigail's murder. Esther stands over Sister Abigail with a bloody hammer while Max covers under the bridge. The last one is of Esther and Max in the tree house. Esther is covered in blood.

DANIEL

What did she do in the tree house?

MAX

SHE PUT THE BAD THINGS THERE.

Suddenly, Esther's O.S. Humming STOPS. Daniel looks up, alarmed.

DANIEL

She's coming.

Max quickly hides the pictures. Daniel scrambles to the door, but pauses and signs to Max as best he can.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be all right.