

The Case Load

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INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

A bright, cheerful room. Colorful artwork adorns the walls. Seven children, ranging in age from

approximately 6 to 15, sit in a semi-circle of comfortable chairs.

CHRISTY (30s, warm, empathetic), a social worker with kind eyes and an easy smile, sits facing them.

LIAM (15) is hunched over, hands pressed to his ears, wincing as if in pain. A faint, almost imperceptible shimmer pulses around him when strong emotions hit.

MAYA (10) sits stiffly, her gaze fixed on a small, squishy stress ball she's kneading. When her

tension rises, the ball visibly distorts, squishing into impossible shapes before reforming. A pencil on a nearby table subtly trembles.

NOAH (12) is mostly visible, but with a slight shimmering distortion around his edges. When stressed or frustrated, his outline flickers, almost momentarily disappearing. He nervously fiddles with a bulky black wristband - a "power suppressant."

LEO (8) sits quietly, picking at a loose thread on his jeans. When his emotions flare, a faint heat haze shimmers off his hands, and sometimes a tiny wisp of smoke curls from a loose thread.

CHLOE (14) bounces her leg restlessly, a blur of motion. When agitated, her movements become impossibly quick, blurring her hands as she fidgets with a loose thread on her shirt.

ETHAN (6) has a worn, slightly lopsided teddy bear sitting upright next to him. When Ethan speaks to it, the bear's head will sometimes tilt discernibly, or its small, button eyes seem to track his words.

ALEX (11), non-verbal and autistic, sits at the end of the semi-circle. They hold a small, smooth skipping stone, turning it over and over in their fingers with precise, repetitive motions. There's

an almost perceptible deep hum in the air around them, intensifying when their focus is intense or they are agitated. When their power stirs, a glass of water on a nearby side table vibrates faintly.

CHRISTY

Okay everyone, let's check in.
Maya, you want to start us off?How
was your week?

Maya nods, squeezing the stress ball. It compresses so
tightly it looks like it might burst. The

pencil on the side table hops a millimeter.

MAYA

My parents argued again. Mr.
Henderson's vase... it almost didn't
make it. Again. I had to really...
hold it down.

CHRISTY

I'm sorry to hear that, Maya. It
sounds incredibly stressful.
Liam, you seem pretty plugged in
today. Everything coming through
loud and clear?

Liam groans, pressing his hands harder to his ears. The air
around him ripples for a moment.

LIAM

Too clear! Mrs. Henderson is
thrilled about her new cat, Mr.
Henderson is annoyed about his
dentard, and my mom is worried
about taxes. And there's a new kid
at school who is just... so happy!
It's like a thousand radios on full
blast in my head! My teeth hurt
from all the... joy!

CHRISTY

That sounds exhausting, Liam.
Remember that trick we talked
about? Focus on just one sound. My
voice, maybe? Or the feeling of
your feet on the floor?

Liam closes his eyes, trying to concentrate. The ripples
around him slowly subside.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

To Noah) Noah, how are things with
the... accessory?

Noah pulls at his wristband, a frown on his face. He flickers
slightly, momentarily looking like a heat haze before
solidifying.

NOAH

It still makes me itchy. And it's hard to just... disappear when my little sister is annoying me. She kept poking me! But Mom says I have to keep it on. To be "normal." She doesn't get that sometimes disappearing is the only normal.

CHRISTY

We talked about what "normal" means here, didn't we? It's about being your best self, not someone else's idea of you. Leo? Your turn.

Leo looks up, his eyes a little watery. A small wisp of smoke curls from his earlobe.

LEO

My dad said my room was a mess, and then I got really mad, and my favorite comic book...

He gestures vaguely, and a small, almost invisible heat wave emanates

from his palm)
...it got crispy. I just wanted to make him feel how mad I was, but not... that mad.

CHRISTY

Oh, Leo. That's tough. We're still working on finding those safe ways to let the big feelings out, right? Chloe, you're practically vibrating over there.

Chloe stops bouncing her leg for a second, then starts again, faster. Her hands blur as she picks at a thread on her sleeve.

CHLOE

Everything is just so SLOW! School, walking, waiting for the bus. My brain goes so fast, and everyone else is just... molasses. I tried to wait for my friend at her locker, but then I was just... on the other side of the hallway. Before I even thought about it! It's like my body moves before my brain.

CHRISTY

It sounds like your world moves at a different pace, Chloe. Ethan, how about you? Did Barnaby have any adventures this week?

Ethan smiles, gently nudging his teddy bear. The bear's head tilts towards Christy.

ETHAN (WHISPERING)

He wanted to go to the park, but the swings were too quiet. He likes when the other kids talk to him. He said they just look at him funny when he says "hello."

CHRISTY

It can be hard to find friends who understand you, can't it? Especially when your friends are... a little bit unique.

Christy then turns her gaze to Alex. Alex is still meticulously turning the stone. The deep hum

around them subtly intensifies, and the glass of water on the side table vibrates visibly, creating small concentric ripples.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Alex, you're so focused on that stone today. Are you trying to tell us something about how your week went? Did you feel things needed to be just right?

Alex pauses, the stone perfectly aligned with a floor tile. They slowly look up, their bright, almost

too-intense eyes meeting Christy's. For a fleeting moment, their eyes seem to flicker with an inner light, and something far outside the window - a bird high in a tree - seems to freeze mid-flight for half a second. The hum around Alex gently diminishes, and the water in the glass stills.

<CHRISTY

(Softly)

It takes so much power, doesn't it? To keep everything perfectly balanced. To make sure you don't... well, you know.

Alex offers the smallest, almost imperceptible nod, then returns their gaze to the stone, a sense of calm settling over them.

CHRISTY

All right, everyone. Look around. We've got emotions that explode into flames, senses that overwhelm with the sheer noise of the world, powers that make us disappear or speed up. We have friends who only talk to us, telekinetic abilities that flare with stress, and strength so immense it needs constant, careful control. Every single one of you is incredible. And every single one of you is facing unique challenges that no one else truly understands... except maybe, each other. This room, this group, is a place where you don't have to hide any of that.

Liam has lowered his hands, listening, the ripples around him gone. Maya's grip on the stress

ball has relaxed, it's just a normal squishy ball now. Noah looks less antsy, his outline more

solid. Leo is no longer picking at his jeans, no smoke. Chloe's leg has stilled, her hands calm.

Ethan quietly pats Barnaby, who now just looks like a normal teddy bear. Alex continues their

rhythmic turning, but their body language appears more settled.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

(Smiling gently)
So, today, let's talk about one tiny victory you had this week. One moment where your power, or your unique way of seeing the world, actually helped you, or someone else.

The children exchange hesitant glances, a fragile sense of shared understanding beginning to

bloom.

FADE OUT.