The Homeschooled Boy by Khamanna Iskandarova

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FADE IN:

INT. TWO-STORY TOWNHOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

A FROSTWOOD ELEMENTARY letterhead titled "DEVILS FRATERNITY" with a list of names beneath the title.

PARKER (11), scrawny, peers at it, his eyes shine excited. BEN (11), chubby, fussy, taps on "PARKER, HOMESCHOOLED - NOT CONFIRMED" at the bottom.

> BEN That's you. We meet at my place right next door from here.

Parker points to the word "HOMESCHOOLED".

PARKER Could you scratch it off?

Ben GRUNTS but reaches into a pocket for a pen and crosses it over.

BEN It's double trouble to get you in, you don't even go to Frostwood.

Parker's face falls.

PARKER There's no way they'd let me go to school. ...not yet.

BEN Why do they still keep you at home?

Silent reprimand in Parker's eyes - he can't say.

BEN Whatever. Keep it a secret if it's so important. You sure you want it? The test is a toughy.

PARKER Let's do it.

Ben sneaks out of view. Parker covers his eyes, counts:

PARKER One, two, three, four, five, six...

SOUND of Ben's feet climbing the stairs. Fast. A door swings shut upstairs. Ben calls out from behind the closed door.

BEN (O.S.) Go! Drum roll, para-papa-pab-pah!

Parker opens his eyes. Takes unsure steps forward. His eyes fall on the floor - droplets of blood are all over.

A step at a time Parker treads up the stairs, eyes half shut - he's immersed in his thoughts.

BEN (0.S.) Your feet are made out of bricks or something? Come on.

Parker's brain is hectic at work.

PARKER You shouldn't have done it. There's a reason they keep me homeschooled -I can't get too excited. ...or scared. You wrote it in blood?

BEN (O.S.) --Hurry up if you wanna make the fraternity!

Parker stops in front of the door. Takes a deep breath. Finally, he pokes it open and steps into the --

BATHROOM

And screams:

Ben lies on the floor, blood around his head. Very still, eyes closed. There's vomit on the floor close by.

Ben snaps to life with a giggle. He springs to his feet and straightens up. Clears his throat. Gains a look of importance:

BEN Welcome to the fraternity. Congrats Sir Parker. A Devil at last!

He extends his hand for a grown-up shake. Paper-white, Parker doesn't return it. Ben's lips curl into a sour grimace.

BEN You're one of us now! Isn't it what you wanted? You don't even go to Frostwood, don't you get it?

PARKER I know. I want it bad. ...but you shouldn't have done it. There's a reason I'm homeschooled... Parker eyes the vomit and the blood.

PARKER My mom will be home soon...

Ben rushes for a paper towel on the countertop. Kneels to dry the floor with it.

BEN I'm on it. It's not blood, it's food coloring. Red food coloring. Look.

He fishes a red tube out of his pants. Shoves it under Parker's nose, but Parker is not amused.

Ben reaches for the vomit, it's a fake rubber one. Tucks it under his belt.

BEN Tomorrow we'll talk your mom into letting you go to school. Done deal, no thanks needed.

Parker, eyes wild open, inches toward Ben.

PARKER Ben. Ben. Is Irene home?

BEN My sis Irene? She's always home. ...to bug me!

PARKER --Ben. You have to go home. Now. You have to, you hear?! Have to.

Ben glares:

BEN Sure. I'd go anyway. ...I know when I'm not wanted.

PARKER She's in trouble. You hear? Hurry up.

Ben GROANS.

BEN Beat it, I'm going. I'm not staying with a freak.

Ben tosses away the food coloring. He strides out the door.

Ben hops down the stairs--

HALL

BEN This was your chance... our chance for fun. Once a lifetime chance. Gosh.

Ben reaches the door. Parker trails behind.

BEN How often are you home alone? Never! You're a fun-sucker. Yeah, funsucker. You'll never fit in. Never.

PARKER --Hurry up Ben. You can save her.

BEN Save her? Just drop it. Freak.

Parker, shoulders slumped, just stands there.

PARKER I'm still a Devil though, right?

Ben GROANS. Slams the door shut behind.

EXT. TWO IDENTICAL TOWNHOUSES - NIGHT

Ben's townhouse is next to Parker's.

Ben hurtles down the patio. Leaps up his own patio. He prods the door. It doesn't budge.

BEN Well, that's weird.

He gives it another try. It slides open and Ben steps inside.

INT. BEN'S TOWNHOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Pitch black. Ben frowns.

Parker?

He flicks the light and his eyes fall on the floor - droplets of blood all around. Ben stops. Swallows hard. His heart in a race, his breath heavy. His eyes narrow:

BEN

A SHRIEK from the upstairs. A door squeaks open. Ben cocks his head but hears and sees no one.

Heart in a frantic race, he starts up the stairs. A stair at a time. He stops in front of a door. Pokes it open.

BATHROOM

IRENE, 16, eyes closed, on the floor. Blood oozes out from her nose forming a blood puddle around her head just like the one around Ben's head at Parker's.

Wide-eyed, Ben crouches next to her. Her eyes flutter open, she regards Ben. Lifts her head and looks around.

IRENE What happened? You disappeared...

She rubs her forehead.

IRENE Did I pass out? I was downstairs looking for you... then my nose started bleeding. I came here... I remember throwing up--

Ben traces her look, there's vomit on the floor. Ben checks out the fake vomit - the real one is an exact replica of the fake.

> IRENE I'm alright now. I guess.

She struggles up. Color returns to her face. Ben gives her a pat and dashes out into the--

HALL

He races toward the door. Back to Parker's.

EXT. IDENTICAL TOWNHOUSES - NIGHT

From his patio Parker watches Ben step out. Ben tries to steady his heavy breathing. Their eyes meet.

BEN When did you do it? How?

Parker's lips do not move, yet Ben hears:

PARKER (V.O.) I didn't mean to. You scared me. She's gonna be alright. For sure.

Wide-mouthed, Ben nods.

PARKER (V.O.) My brain kinda did it on its own. Can't control my powers yet. That's why--

BEN (aloud) -- You're homeschooled! ...I know.

Parker's eyes fixed on Ben, a plead in them. Out loud:

PARKER Am I still in? ...just wanna be one of the guys. ...the Devils. ...feel normal.

Something in Parker's face makes Ben close his mouth and nod.

FADE OUT