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COLD OPEN

EXT. CULT - DAY

A HANDHELD camera scans a rural road with crumbling asphalt. Rolling fields surround forgotten farms.

And right in the middle, a rusty metal gate at the end of a gravel driveway. There's a massive BILLBOARD with **CULT U.S.A.** written in peeling paint.

Two KIDS (5 and 7) sit at a makeshift stand selling KOOL-AID with paper cups.

A dilapidated VAN smashes through the gate and up the road.

INT. VAN - DAY

PJ(late 30s) fixes his hair too close to the camera. Uses the lens as a mirror. He's dressed like a camp counselor with an unsettling childlike wonder and distant stare.

PJ
(singing to himself)
We rollin'. We rollin'.

Someone behind the camera signals to him.

PJ (cont'd)
Ohh, we're rolling?

PJ moves away from the camera and sits against a large cardboard standee with a printed landscape photo. Forces a flustered smile. Readies himself for his big moment.

PJ (cont'd)
Family is everything. I've always said
that. Said it right 'outa the womb.

Makes himself smaller. Head to his chest. Mock wails:

PJ (cont'd)
Maaa. Mommmmyyyy. Dadddy.

A smile. Waits for the laugh. Nothing. And the scene BUMPS. The van hits a pothole.

PJ (cont'd)
(fake pilot voice)
Just a little turbulence. Hold on to
your loved ones.

A VOICE we'll only know as "CAMERA" interrupts--an unseen documentary crew that's found a gem in middle America:

CAMERA (O.C.)
Is that why you started this?

PJ
Huh? Ohh, yeah. Our cult is everything you could ever want. And I'm the papa. Papa Smurf, if you will, but only my lovers call me that.

CAMERA (O.C.)
Why?

PJ
Cause of the blue balls.

Someone ducks into view. A Gen-Z Latina sorority girl, ISABELLA(20s), whispers to him.

PJ (cont'd)
I didn't know it meant that.

And BANG. The scene shakes. The cardboard standee behind PJ tips over.

BEEPPPP.

The camera shifts. Reveals that we're in the back of the VAN.

WILBUR(30s), a mountain of a man who's seen some shit, is at the wheel. He HONKS at an OLD WOMAN(80s) crossing the road.

WILBUR
(thick southern accent)
DIDN'T KNOW OLD CROWS WERE BLIND!

The OLD WOMAN flips him off. Smashes her walker to the van.

Isabella points the cameraman back to PJ. Straightens the cardboard scenery behind him.

PJ
Right, well--

The van speeds off again. Jerks PJ around.

PJ (cont'd)
The family is really special. Smart, loyal, hardworking...sometimes. Can't wait to give you the *grandé* tour soon. We'll head back after we finish this quickie errand.

Wilbur slow the van and HONKS again.

WILBUR
COME ON. Who slows down on yello'.

PJ
(jazz hands)
It's almost showtime!

Isabella tries to pull a ski mask over PJ's smiling face.

ISABELLA
Hold still!

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

JAKE(19) waits on a bustling sidewalk with a suitcase. An exceedingly normal and boring kind of barely-adult. He glances at a camera nearby watching him.

JAKE
Can I help you with something?

The van comes speeding up through the airport traffic. Screeches to a stop in front of Jake. PJ, Isabella, and Wilbur all rush out in ski masks.

PJ holds up a binder with a photo of Jake on the front.

PJ
That's Jake. Get him.

They drag him into the back of the van. It's slow and a little awkward. Passerbys just watch.

JAKE
(to the onlookers)
It's fine...I think.

AIRPORT SECURITY
Move along. You can't park here.

PJ
(to Jake)
Can you just lift your leg a bit?

Jake helps. Gets in the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

PJ rips off his mask. Smiling but sweaty. Wilbur drives off.

PJ
(to camera)
And you're probably wondering what we're doing now.
(MORE)

PJ (cont'd)
(catches his breath)
We're growing the family!

JAKE
Hey, did you grab my suitcase?

INT. VAN - LATER

They drive out of the airport. Sit uncomfortably squashed together in the back. Luggage stuffed under their feet.

PJ
Jakey Jakey. Shakin' bakey.

JAKE
Just 'Jake', please.

PJ
Absolutely my good sir!

PJ writes it down and flips through the binder. The pages are barely public printed social media profiles.

JAKE
Where'd you get all that?

PJ
Online. I've been taking a class.

Isabella pulls off her mask. Spits out hair from her mouth.

ISABELLA
It's fine. He's harmless.

The camera shifts to Wilbur sitting in the front with the OLD WOMAN from earlier.

CAMERA (O.C.)
Is she coming back with us too?

WILBUR
Naw, we do some uber pool. Three stars baby.

PJ proudly offers a bottle of water to Jake.

PJ
Water?

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE**EXT. CULT - DAY**

The van smashes through the gate again. The kool-aid sign topples over.

TALKING HEAD - PJ

PJ sits in front of the cardboard standee outside.

PJ

My name is PJ Homestead-Usa. And I run a cult.

He holds up a brochure to the camera: a photo of his smiling face in a sack race beating a kid.

PJ (cont'd)

Now now now, it's not what you think. Cults get a bad name. But we're different.

QUICK CUT. He walks around an old campground.

PJ (cont'd)

Five years ago I was nothing. Alone. Unhappy. And then I get this call out of nowhere. And this deep voice said: "*PJ, I'm your father*". And I said: "*God?*". And he said: "*No, what are you talking about, we left you at the fire station when you were born*".

(mimes surprise, tears)

And that's how I found out I was adopted. But I never got to meet them cause they died the next day.

CAMERA (O.C.)

I'm so sorry.

PJ

They probably wouldn't have liked what they met anyway...but they gave me everything in their will. So I decided I wasn't going to be alone or unhappy ever again. I bought this land. What can I say, THE PEOPLE CAME. I give them housing, food, whatever they need. And I get a family in return.

CAMERA

So...like a commune?

PJ
No, no we're a cult. Did you see the billboard?

(camera nods)
Cults are tax-exempt with the right number of '*willing*' participants.

INT. VAN - DAY

PJ
Cult Usa's the name of the game. You ready? You excited?

JAKE
Wait...Usa. Not U.S.A.?

PJ
Yeah, like my parent's last name.

Jake flips through the brochure.

JAKE
But there's periods between the letters. And it's capitalized.

PJ
--That's for *drama*. Emphasis.

TALKING HEAD - JAKE

Jake sits in front of the standee. Uncomfortable at first.

JAKE
I'm going to the University of Florida in the fall. My dad wants me to study business like him.

CAMERA (O.C.)
But you ended up here?

JAKE
Before life really starts I wanted to experience things, you know, just for the summer.

(worry setting in)
It's not like they can force me to stay, right?

EXT. VAN - DAY

The van door opens and PJ jumps out. Jake follows.

PJ
Welcome home!

It's an abandoned camp with trailers and cabins around a fire pit. Unremarkable and mundane in every way. But this is *home*.

PJ (cont'd)
Where is everyone?

A few scattered people wander in the background. Wilbur and Isabella shrug. PJ paces.

PJ (cont'd)
We had a banner and confetti and-- everyone's supposed to be here. How about we all just jump back in the van. Real quick.

He shoos everyone back to the van.

PJ (cont'd)
Isabella, ring the bell!

ISABELLA
The bell's still broken.

PJ
Let's just get everyone here. We'll redo it. LET'S GROUNDHOG THIS BITCH.

JAKE
No, no we don't have to.

PJ
You're a very good soul. Has anyone ever told you that?

JAKE
Uhhh, my mom.

PJ
(shaking it off)
Alright then. You're probably excited to look around? No need to answer. I see it all over your face.

Jake is more nervous than excited. It's obvious. PJ walks off. Pulls Jake's suitcase through dirt and gravel.

WILBUR
If that's your excited face you should get it fixed.

They follow PJ towards the one solid structure--a community building. Isabella struggles with the cardboard standee.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A basketball court and a little stage. Crusty coffee in the corner. A makeshift office in a storage room. Everything cracked and crumbling. *It's sad, but lived in and loved.*

PJ

This is where the magic happens!

JAKE

What kind of magic?

PJ

Do you like Lord Of The Rings?

JAKE

Yeah.

PJ

That kind of magic. The magic of friendship. Fellowship. I'm a bit of a 'Sam' myself.

Jake nods along. Wilbur starts setting up folding chairs.

PJ (cont'd)

You?

JAKE

Hmmm?

PJ

Which member of the fellowship?

JAKE

I...umm. The ring probably.

A heavy pause.

PJ

I loooovvve that. You give them purpose. You give them meaning.

TALKING HEAD - PJ

Shows the camera around the building. He points at two huge portrait paintings on the wall.

PJ (cont'd)

That. That right there is Rose and Kennedy Usa. Amazing people. I bought this abandoned camp with their inheritance. AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE is their domain and I'm kinda the caretaker. Their souls and hearts are
(MORE)

PJ (cont'd)
 here with me. But not like The
 Shining. This ain't no haunted hotel!
 (mimes cutting with ax)
 Or that's what I keep telling people.
 (serious now)
 Pass that along though. People are
 starting to get really worried.
 Seeing things...you know.

BACK TO SCENE -

Jake looks around the community center.

Isabella hurries from the office to PJ. Hands him a note.

ISABELLA
 That man from the bank called again
 about the audit.

PJ
 There's no time for that.

He shoos off Isabella as Jake comes over.

PJ (cont'd)
 Now, you've caught us with our pants
 down a bit. AHH don't look.
 (laughs alone)
 We had this whole party planned.
 Everyone was gonna be here. But don't
 worry. We'll still have it tonight.

JAKE
 I don't need a party.

PJ
 Of course you do. Everyone needs a
 welcome party. Everyone that gets one
 stays. You wanna stay, right?

JAKE
 I'm thinking about it...definitely.

PJ
 Now THAT'S the kind of enthusiasm I'm
 talkin' 'bout.

PJ hands the suitcase to Isabella.

PJ (cont'd)
 Now Isabella will show you the ropes.
 Set you up in your sweeeeet suite.
 And deal...no party, okay?

PJ winks at him, badly.

JAKE

Right, no party.

Isabella walks off with the suitcase. Jake follows. Wilbur comes up to PJ. Watches the new kid walk off.

WILBUR

New meat looks like he ain't stayin'.
Just like the rest.

PJ

This can't be happening again. We
can't lose another recruit.

WILBUR

Stuff happens, boss.

PJ

No. No. No. Don't say that. This one
matters. We need him.

WILBUR

We can't force him to stay. That boy
could be gone tomorrow.

PJ

Don't say that. It'll happen now.
You're like a freakin' fortune cookie
with your bad juju.

WILBUR

What'd you call me?

CAMERA (O.C.)

You can't say that.

PJ

Knock on wood so it doesn't happen!

Wilbur stomps the wood floor. PJ copies him, but it buckles
beneath his foot and caves in.

EXT. CULT - DAY

Isabella struggles with the heavy suitcase.

JAKE

Can I help with that?

ISABELLA

No, no I insist.

He watches her fight with it in the gravel.

JAKE
You been here long?

ISABELLA
Six months give or take.

JAKE
Give or take what?

ISABELLA
A year.

TALKING HEAD - ISABELLA

ISABELLA (cont'd)
My name's Isabella Ava María Rosa.
Graduated top of my class from Brown.
Ki Pi Si sisters for life. Gemini.
Majored in Communications. I'm
basically if Elle Woods was in
Ravenclaw with just a dash of *Cholula*.

CAMERA (O.C.)
How did you find this place?

ISABELLA
It was hard finding a job after
college. No one tells you that. But I
found this opportunity on on
Craigslist and wasn't murdered or
anything. And PJ's nice. Takes care
of us and stuff. And did I tell you I
get a paycheck. Real responsibility
too, not just coffee and copies. I
don't know anyone I graduated with
who has that right now. Seriously.

BACK TO SCENE -

Isabella drags his suitcase in the dirt. Not careful with it.

JAKE
So...

ISABELLA
So?

JAKE
What's the deal with this place?

ISABELLA
You gotta be more specific.

Isabella ducks under a rusty metal sculpture. Jake follows.
A piece breaks off in his hand. He tosses it into a bush.

JAKE

Come on. You're the only normal one.

ISABELLA

If you're looking for normal, then
you're at the wrong cult.

(re: his look)

Maybe there isn't a deal.

JAKE

Just stop me when I get close. Okay?
Sex...drugs.....murder?

She stops short. Gets too close to him. Serious now.

ISABELLA

You heard about that?

(he nods)

So you know about that one time PJ
lured Mr. Green into the garden.

Isabella motions to a garden nearby. A few bystanders watch
them curiously. Ominously. Jake visibly gulps.

JAKE

And then?

ISABELLA

...WHACKED him with the candlestick.

(DROPS his suitcase)

And won game night...again. None of
us stood a chance.

She smiles and walks off. He grabs the suitcase. Struggles
to keep up with her as they go through the compound.

JAKE

That wasn't funny.

ISABELLA

I don't know what you "*Florida people*"
expect. But you're not gonna find it.

She stops outside a trailer at the edge of the compound.

JAKE

"*Florida people*". I'm offended.

ISABELLA

You should be. I wouldn't want people
thinking I'm from there either. Is
that why you came?

JAKE

What?

ISABELLA

We're all running away or towards something. Everyone comes here for a reason. And I'll figure you out too, just like the rest.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER, OFFICE - DAY

PJ sits at a computer. Wilbur stands behind him.

PJ

(to camera)

We're making a list for tonight. Everyone's gonna get a thing.

WILBUR

Put jazz. I love jazz.

PJ

No one loves jazz. They just tolerate it in elevators.

WILBUR

Put fog machine.

PJ

It's working again?

TALKING HEAD - WILBUR

WILBUR

My name's Wilbur, not like the pig, but like my grandfather. He was named after a pig though. But not the pig from that book. A different one.

Wilbur tapes up a fog machine. SPARKS fly.

WILBUR (cont'd)

Did a stint in prison for a while. Went to do one of those scare kids programs to stop criminals before they metastasize. Went to take a shit cause you gotta get that two-ply when you can. And they left me there. Bus was gone. Tried to turn myself back in but sometimes the universe gives you a sign and next thing you know... destiny. And not like my boy behind bars. It's like that shit that Nietzsche writes. That destiny.

He turns on the fog machine. And it works.

BACK TO SCENE -

PJ
Annnnnnddddd print.
(to camera)
See, it's all about delegation and
teamwork and sweat.

WILBUR
Yeah, you got that, boss.

PJ
Thanks. Wait, which one?
(smells himself)
Always joking around here.

PJ holds a smile to the camera. Waiting for--

PJ (cont'd)
It's not working?

Wilbur checks the printer. It's stalled. PJ nervously peeks through the blinds. Dozens of people gather.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

MARVE (60s) in a wheelchair, tough old asshole talks to his wife MADGE (60s), kind but not gonna take any shit from anyone, especially her husband. They chat with AMELIA (40s), single mother. An infant (1) in her arms and another kid (8) jumps off chairs like WWE.

AMELIA
Is the meeting about the bathrooms?

MADGE
Honey, those have been fixed for a week. Where've you been...you know?

Amelia hands the infant to Madge and hurries off.

AMELIA
Watch the kids, will you?

The Kid jumps on the back of Marve's wheelchair. Rides him like a cart at the supermarket.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER, OFFICE - DAY

PJ and Wilbur stare at the printer.

WILBUR
Printers are some twilight zone shit.

PJ
What if we just kick it?

WILBUR
It doesn't work that wa...

Wilbur considers it. Kicks it with full force. And the printer CHURNS.

PJ
Just like I said. Teamwork and delegation.

WILBUR
And sweat.

INT. JAKE'S TRAILER - DAY

It's dingy and musty. Isabella opens curtains. Jake looks outside. Spots a sinking baby pool.

JAKE
Look, a water view.

He tries to open the window. She stops him.

ISABELLA
The bathrooms were down for a few days. Don't go near that till it rains again.

She clears trash from the table. Looks around.

ISABELLA (cont'd)
So we took all of Steven's stuff out.

JAKE
Who's that?

ISABELLA
We don't talk about him.

Jake goes to sit on the couch.

JAKE
He dead or--

A guy jumps up from the blankets on the couch. SCREAMS. Meet, GUY (30s) wearing a potato sack sarong.

Jake PUNCHES him in the throat. Guy rolls to the floor.

ISABELLA
WHAT THE HELL.

JAKE
Who's that?

ISABELLA
WHY'D YOU DO THAT?

GUY
Grounsdfklsdflsdjf

JAKE
Why'd I do that? But--

Guy jumps up. Charges Jake and HUGS him. Kisses his cheeks.

GUY
(wheezes)
Ugh, you got my sweet spot.

ISABELLA
Are you okay?

GUY
Better than bacon grease on a hog.
You must be Jake. You like bacon?

Guy wipes his palm on the sarong. Grabs Jake's hand.

JAKE
Sometimes.

GUY
I cook it every morning. Four AM
sharp. Better than an alarm clock.

JAKE
Every morning?

Isabella pulls Jake's suitcase in from outside.

ISABELLA
Your bed's in the back.

GUY
I've got a tickle of the 'noggin.

JAKE
Shoot.

Guy stops, confused. Laughs. Pops out a pair of finger guns that could poke an eye out.

GUY
Two mattresses together. Like a
sandwich. It's better than bunk beds.

JAKE
That's...um.

ISABELLA
Maybe not for his first night, Guy?

JAKE
Yeah, or ever. That'd be fine too.

A bell RINGS outside. Isabella heads for the door.

ISABELLA
Can you show him around?

GUY
Your wish is my command, Madam.

She leaves. Jake watches her go. Dozens of people head for the community building.

JAKE
You don't have to go to the meeting?

Guy pulls out a blunt.

GUY
I'm excused for medical reasons.
(takes a puff)
Glaucoma.

EXT. CULT - DAY

Isabella hurries towards the community center. A lost looking TAX-MAN wanders around lost, balding with an oversized suit and briefcase.

TAX-MAN
Excuse me Miss, I'm from the IRS and I'm looking for a Mr. PJ Homestead...
(checks his records)
Usa. Do you know where I can find him?

ISABELLA
Lo siento, no hablo ingles.

TAX MAN
Oh, of course. Yes.

She walks off.

TAX MAN (cont'd)
(perfect Spanish)
Disculpas, señorita. ¿Puedes decirme dónde encontrar a PJ Homestead Usa?

Isabella stops short. *Dammit. That didn't work.*

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Everyone takes their seats. *It's a strange crowd of misfits you'll grow to love.*

PJ
 Quiet down. Quiet down.
 (taps a silent mic)
 I said--

Wilbur plugs in the microphone.

PJ (cont'd)
 QUIIIIIETTTT.

PJ drops the mic. Stumbles over it. Kicks it off the stage. And the room is quiet. Watching. PJ shrinks back. Less comfortable with the limelight than we'd expect.

PJ (cont'd)
 What--what happened guys? Where was
 the big party?

A muted murmur in the audience. Isabella hurries in alone.

PJ (cont'd)
 I sent out an e-vite. It had confetti.

A man stands, ANTONIO LOCINO (70s), always wearing a suit and heavy jewelry. Looks like he belongs in the mob.

ANTONIO LOCINO
 Wasn't that last week?

PJ
 That was my birthday.

An awkward silence. PJ takes a seat at the edge of the stage. Head in his hands.

PJ (cont'd)
 Membership is down. And Isabella
 isn't getting any younger. We need a
 new generation. All the yeezies, and
 clock-toks, and this thing:
 (he dabs)
 I need to know what it all is.

A Kid in the audience throws a ball at PJ's head.

PJ (cont'd)
 COME ON. We've lost five people this
 year and now Steven's gone. You want
 Jake to go too? We can't afford...
 emotionally to lose anyone else.
 (MORE)

PJ (cont'd)
What are we without family and...he's
one of us now. We have one shot for a
good impression. And we might have
already lost our chance.

WILBUR
That's true, boss.

PJ glares at Wilbur. The crowd murmurs.

PJ
Isabella, anything to report?

ISABELLA
He punched Guy.

PJ stands. Paces the floor. Builds up his showmanship again.

PJ
Ugh, two strikes. ALMOST OUT. Come on.
Am I the only one on the team here?

ISABELLA
We can still have the party.

PJ
Yes. YES!

WILBUR
Got the balloons and banner.

The crowd murmurs agreement.

PJ
That's what I want to hear!

Wilbur brings out a large bowl with folded pages inside. He
takes for himself. Passes the rest around.

PJ (cont'd)
Come on now. Take a food, drink, or
decoration. This is our last chance.

WILBUR
Hear that? Clear your schedules!

Everyone shuffles to grab one and leave. PJ takes the last.

PJ
And I got sweet potatoes. Yuck.

Madge hands the infant to PJ.

PJ (cont'd)
I watch him on Tuesdays and Thursdays,
Madge. I don't have time to--

MADGE
And I'm retired.

She walks off. Marve wheels himself after her.

MARVE
That's all I hear...every night!

PJ's left with the baby--*and will be for the rest of the day.*

PJ
(to infant)
Guess you're stuck with me.

CAMERA (O.C.)
How many people live here, PJ?

PJ looks to the camera, forgetting for a moment about them.

PJ
Thirty or so. And we all do our part
to contribute. I might provide the
moolah, but they provide the heart.
(looks for an escape)
Have you met our most interesting
family? We try to have all types here.

PJ brings the camera to an Amish family. ABRAHAM/ESTHER (40s)
and their goth son, LAZER (15) aka Lazarus.

PJ (cont'd)
Abe and Esther and--

ABRAHAM
Abraham, please.

PJ
Right, right. And where are the girls?

Right behind PJ are TWIN AMISH GIRLS (6), straight out of
the Shining. PJ jumps.

PJ (cont'd)
JESUS. Stop doing that.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY**

PJ hurries out of the building, bumps into the CAMERA. Does one of those awkward *side to side dances*.

PJ

Sorry. 'Scuse me. 'Squeeze me.

An ALARM rings across the camp.

CAMERA (O.C.)

What's that?

A MAN peeks down from the flimsy lookout tower. Struggles to turn the alarm off. He shouts down:

MAN

(inaudible)

PJ

WHAT? No. Turn the alarm off.

MAN

(inaudible)

PJ

WHAT?

Wilbur unplugs the speaker at the bottom of the tower.

MAN

WILD PIGS ON THE ROAD.

PJ

SOMEONE GET THE

(quiet now)

gun, please. Thank you.

PJ straps the infant to his chest. Jogs up the dirt road with it. Jake and Guy step out of their trailer.

PJ (cont'd)

JAKE, FOLLOW ME.

Isabella zooms up to PJ with a golf cart.

PJ (cont'd)

Got the gun?

ISABELLA

Shined and loaded.

PJ jumps in the passenger side. Jake hurries up to them.

PJ
Miss Daisy, you wanna ride in back?

JAKE
I...ummmm.

PJ yanks him into the back. They speed towards the road.

CAMERA (O.C.)
Did he say gun?

Wilbur watches them go.

TAX-MAN
Was that Mr. Usa?

WILBUR
Who's askin'?

The Tax-Man pulls out a business card. Wilbur snags it. Stares at it skeptically.

WILBUR (cont'd)
Wooo. Real classy.

Wilbur tosses it to the ground. Wraps an arm around him. Leads him towards the wooded treeline.

WILBUR (cont'd)
That ain't him. But I'll take you right to Mr. PJ.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A cop kicks at the base of the billboard. This is 'STACHE(40s), straight out of an 80s porno. The golf cart speeds up the road. Crashes through the gate.

PJ
Look what the coyote dragged in,
'Stachhheeeee.

'STACHE
Heard you have some new blood. Just wanted to come around. Welfare check.

PJ
We're all plenty well.

'Stache snatches a paper cup of Kool-aid from the kid's stand. Chugs it. Throws it to the dirt.

'STACHE
I'll believe that when pigs fly.

PJ

Then jump off a bridge why don't you?

'Stache whips off his sunglasses.

TALKING HEAD - 'STACHE

'STACHE

The name's French, so don't get any silly ideas.

JUMP CUT:

'STACHE (cont'd)

I've been patrolling these roads for twenty years and I've never met anyone like PJ or those people in there. All they do is sing the kumbaya and probably smoke the kumbaya. So I'll ask you: what good has ever been called a cult? And don't give me that Oprah shit. That doesn't count. She's a saint.

CAMERA (O.C.)

Has anything bad ever happened here?

'STACHE

Not that I know of...yet. But I come by once in a while, flash the badge. Make sure they know Ohio frowns on orgies and animal sacrifices. Zero tolerance. Anyway. My partner likes commin' down here too.

BACK TO SCENE -

'Stache and PJ are mid-staring contest when there's a SLAM of the cop car door. PEGGY(30s) saunters towards them. She's five foot nothing of Midwest pep and a little too much apple pie. Bubbly and whip-smart.

PEGGY

What am I seeing here, boys?

PJ claps in 'Stache's face and he blinks.

'STACHE

'Ya cheated again.

PJ

It's not cheating if you don't see it coming.

PEGGY
Boys stop it.

PJ turns to Peggy. All smiles. Softer and quieter when she's around. Smitten if you've ever seen it.

PJ
Peggy, I didn't know you'd be coming.
I would have invited you to the...
(looks to Jake)
P-A-R-T-Y. Six pm. Can you come?

PEGGY
Sorry, PJ. I'm on duty till nine.

A soft look between them. It lingers too long.

PJ
(runs to golf cart)
Oh, I got your gun. Shined and loaded.

PEGGY
You get that raccoon?

TALKING HEAD - PJ

PJ
Turns out it was Guy--

INT. PANTRY - PAST (SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE)

Guy eats out of the pantry like a raccoon at night...naked. Blurred in all the right places. He ravages the closet.

PJ (V.O.)
--in the pantry. He took it
surprisingly well.

Suddenly Guy JUMPS. Shrieks silently. Rolls to the ground clutching his blurred butt.

EXT. ROAD, CULT U.S.A. - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

PEGGY
We can't stay long. Just heard about
a buggy chase on the highway.

PJ
Is it Wednesday again already?

PJ and Peggy share a laugh. No one else does. She puts the gun in the cruiser. Pulls out a tin of food.

PEGGY
 But I couldn't visit without bringin'
 Meemaw's brownies.

PJ
 Ugh, you're too good to me.

PJ digs into the tin. Stuffs his face with a brownie.

TALKING HEAD - PEGGY

PEGGY
 My grandmother lived here her last
 years instead of hospice. PJ took
 care of her real good night and day.

TALKING HEAD - PJ

PJ
 Meemaw used to put something really
 special in her brownies. Called it
 love. Felt like love. And that's all
 I'm gonna say about that. Peggy
 doesn't make them quite the same,
 'cause of the uniform I think, but I
 like them even better.

BACK TO SCENE -

PEGGY
 Now we gotta get goin' to stop the
 horses before they hit route 80.

Peggy heads back to the car.

'STACHE
 (to Jake)
 See something, say something. Got it?

'Stache stomps off to the car. Speeds off with the siren. PJ
 watches them go. *Holds onto some moment there.*

PJ
 (to camera)
 I almost asked her out once. Timing
 wasn't right. Never is at funerals.

EXT. BATHROOM - DAY

Guy shows Jake around the property. They stop outside a
 shoddy building.

GUY
And this is "*where the magic happens*". The bathrooms.

JAKE
This is what I'm most scared of.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

It's absolutely gorgeous. No bathroom should look this nice.

JAKE
I...um...

GUY
Look at your face.

Guy grabs the camera. Puts it in Jake's face.

GUY (cont'd)
Look at him.

JAKE
I--just didn't expect it to look--

Jake opens a stall and Abraham is on the toilet. Overalls at his feet. He shouts in German. Jake shuts it quickly.

GUY
We just finished it up last week.
Super nice, right? We won it in one of those home makeover contests. Look at this 'beeuttey. I like to call it a "*beauttyy for the booty*". You know?

Abraham slams open the stall and pulls up his overalls. Rolls up an "Oprah" magazine under one arm.

ABRAHAM
You should knock first.

Abraham shoulders past Jake and leaves.

GUY
AND YOU SHOULD WASH YOUR HANDS.
(to camera)
I got him, right? He heard?

EXT. CULT - DAY (B-ROLL FOOTAGE)

MISC people tend a garden.

MILLENNIALS do yoga in the community center.

MEN play poker in the lookout tower.

KIDS romp on a rusty swing set.

EXT. BATHROOM - DAY

PJ waits outside for them. Pretends to walk up as they exit.

PJ
How're my dudes doing? How's the
tour?

JAKE
Great. It's--it's just great.

GUY
We're basically like brothers now.

JAKE
Well...

PJ
(to camera)
See, just like I said...*family*.

PJ wipes imaginary tears from his eyes.

PJ (cont'd)
Now don't you be going anywhere.
You're stuck on us like glue or...
something stronger. Like, hmmm--

JAKE
(nervous laughter)
Like super glue.

PJ
Exactly. You get it!

GUY
PJ, did that briefcase find you?

PJ
A briefcase? What's a briefcase doing
looking for me?

PJ plays an imaginary drum. *Ba dum tss*. Waits for the laugh.

GUY
No. The guy with the briefcase. He's
asking everyone. Seems real important.

PJ nervously looks around.

PJ
Don't worry about that.

GUY
(re: brownie tin)
Ohh, did Peggy come by?

PJ
No, no these aren't for you. They're--

GUY
--She said that? She specifically
said not to give me one?

PJ reluctantly holds out the tin. Guy smashes a gooey chocolate square to his mouth. They watch him moan and groan as he eats. He offers a glob to Jake.

GUY (cont'd)
You want some?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Wilbur and Isabella stare at the printer on the floor.

WILBUR
I said you can't just kick it.

ISABELLA
If it was fixed I wouldn't have to.

WILBUR
If you didn't kick it, then it
wouldn't be broke.

Wilbur grunts and stomps off.

ISABELLA
Hey, where are you going?

WILBUR (O.S.)
Need duct tape.

INT. PJ'S TRAILER - DAY

The space is smaller and shittier than most. PJ makes sweet potatoes on the stove.

PJ
Never been a fan, but Jake likes them.

CAMERA (O.C.)
How did you find that out?

PJ

I added him on Facebook. Pretended to be some girl he knew from high school. And two years ago he posted a photo of these NASTY ASS PO-TA-TOES so he must like them. November 22, 2018. Five likes. Three comments!

(beat)

Scratch that. Six likes because of Brittney...IT'S BRITTNEY, BITCH.

PJ coos the baby on his chest. Feeds it some sweet potatoes.

PJ (cont'd)

(baby voice)

Is that good? Is that good?

The infant throws the food at PJ.

CAMERA (O.C.)

But why Jake? Why's he so important?

PJ

He's kinda my white whale. Now, that's not as kinky as it sounds.

PJ grabs his "Jake binder" and opens a page to a young smiling boy shaking hands with a Mayor. The newspaper clipping says "*Local Boy Wins Big*".

PJ (cont'd)

A place like this can't run forever with just my dough. You need more than flour to make bread! And everyone has to pitch in. Some more than others. Some not at all. But Jake

(taps the binder)

..he has bingo and Florida money. And--and maybe we need more people around. That's always better, right? Especially for taxes. We need that.

The Camera glances at a stack of red LATE-PAYMENT MAIL.

PJ (cont'd)

(rambling now)

Well, we don't neeeeeeddd it, of course. We don't have any problems here. But it'd be helpful.

There's a loud KNOCK on the trailer door. PJ drops the food. Switches off the lights and rolls to the ground. Signals the camera to do the same.

CAMERA
Who are we hiding from?

PJ
Shhhhhhhhhh...
(notices the food is on fire)
...HHIIITTT.

The baby cries and SHRIEKS.

PJ (cont'd)
No one with your help.

Another KNOCK on the door. Isabella lets herself in. Sees the fire and the mess and the baby. Ignores it.

ISABELLA
We have a problem.

EXT. CULT - DUSK

Jake and Guy walk through a rocky path in the woods.

JAKE
You're sure we're going the right way?

GUY
Are you betting I can't do it with my eyes closed?

JAKE
No. Definitely not.

Guy closes his eyes. Stumbles up the path. Arms outstretched.

GUY
I know this place like my own backside. Every groove.

JAKE
Sooo...uhhh, what do you do during the day?

GUY
Chores and chores and talking and fun. Mostly in that order. If there was air conditioning, you'd think this place was vacation.
(sings off-key)
*iiiiivve' had the time of my
LLLLiiiiiiiiffff And I owe it all to--*

JAKE
Yeah, I--I get it.

GUY

To keep me *occupado* PJ gives me secret assignments too. I'm kinda like his right-hand man.

JAKE

I thought that was Isabella?

GUY

You can't assume that just because she's a woman. It HAS to go to the most qualified.

Guy feels the knots and bark of a tree with his eyes closed.

GUY (cont'd)

Ohh, COME ON! We're almost there.

Guy trips off. Jake follows, turns a bend and--

EXT. LAKE - DUSK

The woods clears to a shimmering blue lake.

MISC PEOPLE swim and play in the water. The Tax-Man floats in the lake, stuck in a floating tube and burnt to a crisp.

GUY

Nice, right? You like it?

JAKE

I'm just surprised.

Jake takes a seat on the dock. Guy scoots close next to him.

GUY

It looks like my eyes aren't the only Caribbean blues you have here.

Guy puts his face next to Jake. Opens his blue eyes WIDE.

GUY (cont'd)

Lucky Jake. You get to wake up to this every morning.

JAKE

With bacon, right?

Guy punches him in the shoulder, hard.

GUY

You get it!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT**

Wilbur and Isabella set up tables and chairs in the dark. Soft jazz plays. PJ comes in with sweet potatoes. Hands the cooking baby to its mother.

PJ

What's with the lights?

WILBUR

Printer caused a short.

PJ

Can you fix it?

WILBUR

You think I'm made of miracles?

The lights go out. Isabella sparks a candle.

ISABELLA

We should have bought that generator.

PJ

I said I would when there's a coupon.

The doors open. Dozens of people file in with their food.

PJ (cont'd)

Smells good. What do you have, Madge?

MADGE

Sweet potatoes. My Mother's recipe.

PJ

Yuck. Wait. That's what I was supposed to make.

MADGE

Marve, you got my paper?

MARVE

Right here in black and white, PJ.

Others lay dishes on the tables. PJ goes wide-eyed.

PJ

(pulls lids off)

Ohh no. No. No No No.

ISABELLA

What's wrong?

PJ
Everything. Everything. What's worse
than a yam party? CAN YOU TELL ME?

WILBUR
Probably one without power.

PJ dips his whole hand on a dish. Eats it. Gags.

PJ
This isn't food. This is like a potato
shit itself and rolled in sugar.

He takes a bite of another dish. Spits it out.

PJ (cont'd)
What the--

ABRAHAM
Esther and I make it without any
sweetness to avoid the Devil's kiss.

ESTHER
It is mostly creamed carrots with
potato water. It fills the belly.

PJ paces. Talks to himself. Everyone watches.

PJ
Is it getting hot in here?

WILBUR
Air conditioning went with the power.

ISABELLA
And Jake will be here soon.

PJ
This is a disaster. Okay Okay. Think.
(slaps himself)
Everyone grab a corner. We're
bringin' this party outside.
(picks up table)
Come on. The children too. Marve, I
got you covered.

Marve glances at his wheelchair. Pissed.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

They drag the table outside. Clumsy. Dropping food.

GUY (O.S.)
Good thing I'm here to help.

Guy and Jake walk over.

PJ
Frickety frick.

JAKE
I can grab a side.

PJ drops the table. Knocks Marve out of his wheelchair.

PJ
SURPRISE!

EVERYONE
(pitiful attempt)
SURPRISE.

Dead silence. Crickets chirp.

JAKE
You did this all for me?
(re: the food)
This looks...awesome. I like sweet
potatoes.

PJ
Sorry it's--

JAKE
No. Seriously. Thank you, PJ.

Jake puts a hand to PJ's shoulder. A sincere thank you.

JAKE (cont'd)
Do you have any with marshmallows?

PJ
Boy, do we.

PJ tosses the Amish dish in the garbage. Isabella fills a plate for Jake.

TAX-MAN (O.S.)
Excuse me.

The Tax-Man lingers nearby in a wet dripping suit.

WILBUR
(motions to Isabella)
We have a problem.

Isabella hurries over to PJ.

TAX-MAN
EXCUSE ME.

Everyone turns. Stares at the stranger. The Tax-Man puffs his chest. More than a little upset.

TAX-MAN (cont'd)
I'm looking for Mr. PJ Homestead Usa.

PJ is numb, horrified. Some long-last reckoning here at last. Isabella and Wilbur trade a worried glance.

JAKE
Sorry, you just missed him.

PJ beams at Jake. Pure love and appreciation.

PJ
(shitty unrecognizable accent)
Yessa. Mr. PJ just left.

The Tax-Man walks over to PJ. Sizes him up as everyone watches in silence...except--

MADGE	MARVE
Don't think he'll be back for awhile.	You ain't seeing him again.

WILBUR
He musta' slipped out when you were
at the lake, sir.

Everyone murmurs agreement. PJ swells with pride.

GUY
But he's right--

Isabella kicks Guy in the shin to shut him up.

ISABELLA
--right OUTTA HERE. Can't keep that
guy around even if we tried.

TAX-MAN
Your English is very good now.

Isabella scoffs. Offended.

CAMERA (O.C.)
You can't say that anymore.

The Tax-Man looks to the camera and the crowd. Hopeless.
Tired. *Done with this shit.*

TAX-MAN
Fine. But call me immediately when
he's back.

He gives PJ a business card, looks him over, and heads up the driveway. His wet shoes squeaking into the night.

WILBUR

Let me take care of that for ya, boss.

Wilbur takes the business card. Tosses it to the ground.

EXT. CULT - NIGHT

MONTAGE of everyone eating and having a good time.

PJ (V.O.)

Sometimes family isn't perfect. But together we're something better than we are apart. And this place wouldn't run--or roll...

Marve struggles with his wheelchair in the dirt.

PJ (V.O.) (cont'd)

...without each and everyone here doin' what they do. You know, being who we are. And being it together.

TALKING HEAD - PJ

PJ

And that's what makes our cult great.

EXT. FIREPIT - NIGHT

The whole community sits around the campfire. Isabella, Guy, and Wilbur chat with Jake. Wilbur roasts a yam.

JAKE

So, honestly. Why are you guys here?

GUY

That's deep, man.

WILBUR

Jobs a job. Fortunate enough to have PJ.

JAKE

Wait, he pays you guys? Is everyone--

WILBUR

Naw. He's just taken' care of 'em. Must like the company I think.

JAKE

Did he win the lottery or something?

ISABELLA

Maybe just enjoy it for a minute...or a summer.

JAKE

You know I'm just here for the summer?

WILBUR

Not lockin' you up or anything. But summers tend to end right when you don't want 'em to.

Abraham pulls out a guitar. Strums a soft and sweet melody. This is summer. This is one of those sweaty nights with fireflies that you'll remember for the rest of your life.

And Abraham sings HARSH GERMANIC VOCALS.

GUY

Welcome to the family, brother.

Guy punches Jake, hard. Everyone laughs. Happy. At peace.

PJ watches the family with great joy. Smiles to himself and sneaks away. No one notices. He gets in the van and drives off. The camera follows in another car. Out of the property.

JAKE (V.O.)

But, how does he do all this. And why?

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

PJ changes his clothes in a parking lot. A vest and uniform. Goes inside. Nearby, the camera watches. He stamps a time card. Goes behind the counter.

WILBUR (V.O.)

Don't know don't ask.

ISABELLA (V.O.)

He helps us and we help him. That's all there is to it.

EXT. FIREPIT - NIGHT

ISABELLA

So, what about you, Florida Jake? Are you running to or from something?

He's reluctant to answer. At a loss for words until his cell phone RINGS.

JAKE

Sorry. One sec. It's my mom.

Jake walks away from the group and towards the treeline. The camera zooms in for a better look. His microphone still on.

JAKE (cont'd)

Hey.

(beat)

Yeah.

(beat)

Yeah, I'm in. I'm here.

(beat)

No, they don't suspect anything.

EXT. FIREPIT - LATER

Jake heads back to the fire. Sits down next to the happy crowd. Isabella burns a marshmallow. Offers it to him.

JAKE

Uhhh, you're a monster.

GUY

Charcoal's good for your colon though.

JAKE

Yeah?

GUY

I could eat it all day.

WILBUR

Let's see it then. I'll get the bag.

ISABELLA

Not again. I'm not cleaning that up!

TALKING HEAD - PJ (DAYTIME)

PJ

So you asked why I do it. Isn't it obvious? It's all about them.

(waving it off)

That's enough about me and the 'fam though. I could talk all day. But like I said, you and your camera can stay as long as you like!

Behind him, the cardboard standee is caught by the wind. Blows away. In its absence, the exact same green scenery that was printed on the cardboard. He runs off.

PJ (cont'd)

We're always lookin' to grow the family.

PJ chases the standee as it rolls down the hill.

END OF SHOW