

GATEFORTH GROUP PILOT

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INT. TOWN HALL - AFTERNOON

A circle of chairs. There are roughly twenty or so people. EMBERLEY, 19, slouches against her chair and stares at the floor. FARRAH sits forward eagerly, staring at GEORGE. IRIS, a larger set 16-year-old, sits shock still apart from chewing her thumb. KI, an androgenous 22-year-old seems bored. ETHAN, 15, fiddles with a fidget cube, timing it to the music in his earphones. BRIDGET, 20, taps her fingers nervously in a particular rhythm. CALEB, 13, glares at DONALD, 40, who holds a cane and taps his foot impatiently. At the head of the circle sits GEORGE, a 36-year-old with too much hair and wearing clothing the epitome of comfort.

GEORGE

So, why don't we kick off by talking about a time we struggled this week? (Pause) Anyone? Ethan? Ethan? Ethan?

ETHAN doesn't notice at first before BRIDGET nudges HIM.

ETHAN

Huh?

GEORGE

A time you struggled this week?

ETHAN

Uh... I... I can't think of any.

GEORGE

Not at all?

ETHAN

Nope.

CALEB raises HIS hand, gingerly.

CALEB

I've got one?

GEORGE

Go ahead, Caleb.

CALEB

Um... so... this morning my foster Mum - Janet - she said I needed to sort out the stuff I brought with me. In it, I found this old book. A fairy tale book.

(MORE)

CALEB (CONT'D)

In the book, there was this one prince- a drawing of a prince I would always look at and I would think about being married to him.

GEORGE

Is he what made you realise you were gay?

CALEB

I guess.

DONALD scoffs.

CALEB (CONT'D)

Problem?

DONALD

I'm not having this conversation again.

FARRAH

(Underbreath, sing-song)  
'Cause no one ever agrees with you

DONALD

Okay. I'll tell you when I've struggled, George. I still, to this day, struggle to get my head round how some kid who has had life handed to them can somehow swindle doctors into giving them a PTSD diagnosis-

KI

Here we go.

DONALD

I'm just struggling with privileged little shits.

CALEB

We're privileged? You're the straight, white-

KI

This is too good.

GEORGE

Can I just point out none of this is helpful language-

DONALD

All of you can calm down- it's not like I'm calling him a faggot.

A pause. KI is laughing hard yet silently.

GEORGE

Well, you... you just said it.

KI is now giggling silently. GEORGE sighs.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

How about some breathing exercises?

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - A COUPLE HOURS LATER

The characters mill about, some take biscuits and watered down juice in cups. BRIDGET is organising the table. FARRAH slides up next to her.

FARRAH

Bridget, right?

BRIDGET

Hm? Oh, yeah. You?

FARRAH

Farrah. Jackson. So... what you in for?

BRIDGET

Um, we're not allowed to ask that.

FARRAH

Don't worry, I won't tell George.

BRIDGET

That's, great. Cool, lovely. I'm gonna go over here now, so, bye.

BRIDGET walks away slightly, returns to frame to fix a fallen cup, and then leaves the frame again. IRIS sits on a seat closest the door, nervously wringing her hands. GEORGE enters. IRIS hesitates, before forcing herself to tap him nervously on the shoulder.

IRIS

George?

GEORGE

Oh, Iris, didn't see you there.

IRIS  
Oh... I was just... sitting, uh,  
George, my Dad-

GEORGE  
Can you just give me a second,  
Iris, I have to talk to Briget

IRIS  
Yes, ok, but... my Dad is outside  
and-

IRIS' DAD (O.S.)  
Iris.

IRIS turns and her DAD is stood in the doorway. IRIS gives up  
on GEORGE and walks to her DAD.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. IRIS' DAD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As IRIS' DAD pulls out the car park, IRIS spots BRIDGET,  
GEORGE and FARRAH leaving the centre. GEORGE comforts  
BRIDGET.

IRIS' DAD  
Did you talk to that counsellor  
then?

IRIS  
I... I didn't get the chance.

IRIS' DAD  
Iris...

IRIS  
Dad, I-

IRIS' DAD  
No. There's no 'I know' about it.  
We've talked about this.

IRIS  
I'm sorry-

IRIS' DAD  
Stop interrupting. Pull your finger  
out. Stop getting so panicky over  
every little thing.

They pull up to their home. As IRIS opens the car door, it covers the shot and we transfer to the door closing in a PE changing room. IRIS gets changed in a corner, attempting to hide. We see things through her eyes; everyone ignoring her, wrapped up in their own gossip. A whistle.

PE TEACHER

Cross country today, ladies. Let's get on a move on!

As they blow the whistle again, we use this to transition to outside where they are blowing the whistle at the start of a track. IRIS stands at the start of the track, deliberately taking a long time to sort her laces. The boys from her year start to join the group.

PE TEACHER (CONT'D)

C'mon lads the girls have beat you  
- what's going on?

IRIS rolls her eyes but as the boys walk by, making comments and giggling at IRIS and the other outcasts she feels a familiar sweat. Her heart beating starts to fill her ears as she approaches the PE TEACHER.

IRIS

Um... Miss?

PE TEACHER

Huh? Oh, Martin. What's up?

IRIS

Are the boys really gonna be... in class with us today?

PE TEACHER

Huh? Oh yeah, course. It's only cross country

IRIS walks away and attempts to hide herself from the snickering boys' and girls' groups around her. SHE stands alone and watches a baby bird take its first flight. Suddenly, the PE teacher steps into shot and blows the whistle in IRIS' face.

PE TEACHER (CONT'D)

C'mon Martin! Get a move on!

IRIS starts to run, clearly uncomfortable. The bullies notice her struggling and slow down.

BULLY ONE

C'mon, Iris. It ain't that hard.  
Why don't you imagine a nice big  
cake at the finish line?

BULLY TWO

Aw, I think that actually made her  
speed up y'know!

IRIS (PANTING)

Please, leave me alone

BULLY ONE

Aww what's wrong - you don't want  
your feelings hurted?

BULLY THREE

C'mon guys, she's not even that fat

BULLY TWO

You need glasses?

IRIS

Leave me alone! I haven't done  
anything to you!

IRIS finds her second wind and starts to run faster away from the bullies, wanting to escape. SHE runs desperately, eyes closed and tears escaping as her mind clouds with insults. We hear gasps and screams. IRIS opens her eyes. Ahead of her is a flight of birds. She looks down. She is flying. Her legs kick at air and the ground starts to shake. The bullies below stare up at IRIS. IRIS' heartbeat can be heard in her ears - she is deathly terrified of heights - it shows. Screaming and kicking her legs, the more she does, the more she flies forward and up. Soon the bullies below are a speck in the distance. IRIS is hyperventilating and looks around desperately for anything to help her down. SHE spots a tall oak tree and kicks herself towards it, landing in the leaves and falling through the branches until she is on the mid-level. A frightened IRIS clings to the tree branches and we can hear the heart-beat in her ears. SHE fumbles around and nearly slips off the branch.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Shit shit shit shit shit...

GEORGE (FAINTLY)

Iris? Iris!

IRIS starts to hear GEORGE'S voice through her haze. SHE starts to calm herself down, her vision finally focusing enough to look down and see GEORGE stood at the base of the tree.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Iris? It's George. Are you okay?  
Can you get down?

IRIS  
I... I don't know

GEORGE  
That's okay. I'll help you get  
down.

As IRIS continues to look down, her vision warps and the heavy heartbeat returns to her ears. SHE clings further onto the branch.

GEORGE (DISTANT) (CONT'D)  
Iris! Iris! You're having a panic  
attack; please remember to ground  
yourself

IRIS (HYPERVENTALATING, BETWEEN SOBS)  
I... CAN'T... GET... TO THE GROUND

GEORGE  
I... I don't mean like that. Isolate  
and tap into your senses; what can  
you see taste and touch?

IRIS  
I can... I can...

GEORGE  
C'mon Iris - you can do it.

IRIS  
I see... I see leaves

GEORGE  
Brilliant, what else

IRIS  
I can hear... hear a car?

GEORGE  
Keep going.

IRIS  
I feel... my clothes

GEORGE  
And what can you taste?

IRIS  
Um...

GEORGE

Iris?

IRIS

Does fear count?

GEORGE suddenly bursts into laughter.

GEORGE

I think we can give you that one.

The beating heart is fainter. IRIS is starting to calm down. GEORGE uses some lower branches to pull himself up, sitting opposite IRIS on a branch.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Follow what I say and you'll be able to get down, okay Iris?

IRIS

Are- are you sure?

GEORGE

Have I ever let you down before? Now, you see that branch? To your right? Lower yourself so your feet touch it.

IRIS does so.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay, lean back on that other branch. Now you're basically in the same position as me. Follow what I do. We'll get down.

A further-back shot as GEORGE and IRIS climb down the tree together, against the skyline. Once IRIS reaches the floor, she sits on the ground, putting her head between her knees to prevent another attack.

IRIS

I... I don't know how I ended up... I was just running and... and then I was... in the air and I... I...

GEORGE

Iris- Iris- don't get yourself into a panic again. Breathe through it. Please. Breathe with me.

IRIS

I wasn't really flying was I? It's impossible. I couldn't have been.

GEORGE

I think... I think you should come with me. We'll go to the hall. Where we have group? We can talk about it there.

A room within the community hall, smaller with some armchairs. IRIS stares at the clock. GEORGE notices.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

School finished just over an hour ago. Your parents gonna be expecting you home?

IRIS

No... My Dad's been working the night shifts - security somewhere. He doesn't get home 'till late - plus I usually spend a couple hours in the library.

GEORGE brings a tea over to IRIS.

GEORGE

Help yourself to sugars, I like about five.

IRIS seems touched by the generosity and grabs three sugar packets, pouring them into her tea.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So, you'll want to know what's going on, I'm guessing?

IRIS

Yeah. Please.

GEORGE

Well... I take it you know what superheroes are? Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash - they're familiar names?

IRIS nods, sipping her tea.

GEORGE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

Well, the simplest way to put it - you're a superhero. Well, you have super powers, I should say.

IRIS is wide eyed and in disbelief.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's a strange thing to hear and you probably think I'm crazy. You have every right to believe so. You have every right to walk out this door and forget everything that happened today. But if you do, you'll never know why, and you'll never access your full potential. Would you like to understand, Iris?

IRIS taps on her cup nervously. SHE looks at the door behind GEORGE. SHE stands up suddenly.

IRIS

I need to pee.

IRIS stands in the bathroom, washing HER hands. SHE stares in the mirror.

IRIS (WHISPERED, STRAINED) (CONT'D)

What the fuck is going on...

SHE looks in the mirror. Thinks of the laughing classmates, her Father's stern face, the constant panic attacks. The shot cuts suddenly to back in GEORGE'S office, IRIS bursts through the door.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Tell me, please.

GEORGE smiles, and motions to sit down. Throughout GEORGE'S speech, there is a comic book recreation of what he's retelling.

GEORGE

Okay, well, the best way to approach this - I started knowing about this a couple years ago. You know Ki? From our sessions? I've known them a while. They came to me one day, because they'd been experiencing... things. Said their body would change randomly without control. One moment they looked how they always did, the next blinked and suddenly had Obama's face. I had friends at the neuroscience department and we did a scan on Ki's brain. Ki suffers from depression and, like a lot of non-binary people, body dysmorphia. Modern, deep enough brain scans can reveal these kinds of things.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But we discovered something else. A growth. But it wasn't a cancer or a tumour. It was something else. It was their powers. Ki's changed brain chemistry had mutated and created this power that flooded into their cells. It was... fascinating. We researched into it further. And we discovered something - Ki was starting to gain control over their shape shifting. Suddenly, they were taking a form on purpose, and able to stay in it for hours at a time. This superpower growth? It was a muscle. With regular exercise, it could get stronger and thus, Ki could get stronger. And Ki wasn't the only one.

The shot returns to GEORGE'S office.

IRIS

So... I have... that as well?

GEORGE

Yes, yes! You do.

IRIS

And I can fly?

GEORGE

Yes

IRIS

Can I... change it? I'm scared of heights.

GEORGE

Um, no... I... I don't think it's possible to change it. This is a very special thing, Iris. Whether you believe in God or science you have to admit that this... this is a miracle. It's fantastic.

IRIS

So... is it just Ki and me, then?

GEORGE smiles and stands up, opening the door and gesturing for IRIS to join HIM. THEY walk through the hallway into the hall from the start of the episode. Sat there is BRIDGET, ETHAN, KI, FARRAH, CALEB and DONALD. THEY all turn around and look at IRIS.

GEORGE

Everyone, you probably recognise  
Iris from group. They're one of us.