

"T H E Y / T H E M"

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THEY / THEM

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1. EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - PRE-DAWN

Silent cul-de-sac. Sprinklers hiss. Sodium lamps buzz.

ALEX REED (18), wiry, sharp-eyed, hood cinched tight, RUNS.
Breath plumes in the cold. Shoes pound asphalt.

Her reflection in car windows paces her stride — but it runs
a half-step ahead. Straighter. Stronger.

Alex pushes harder, desperate to catch herself.

— FLASH - EXT. ELEMENTARY TRACK - DAY (MEMORY)

A tiny baton SLAPS LITTLE ALEX's palm. She stumbles.
Bleachers ripple with laughter.

COACH
(V.O.)
You've got to KEEP UP, Reed!

— BACK TO PRESENT

Alex drives harder, breath ragged.

ALEX (V.O.)
Be the director of your biology.
Writer. Lead. Me.

Her phone glows: "Dr. Huxley Live - Identity Optimization:
Maximum You."
She raises the volume.

2. EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - CONTINUOUS

Empty bleachers. EXIT signs bleeding red from the fieldhouse.

Alex sprints the curve. Side stitch knifes her ribs. She
stumbles.

Her reflection keeps running, effortless.

JACK (O.S.)
Relax. I've got this.

Alex jerks, startled. Spins. No one.

Sprinklers cut off. Silence too still.

She forces herself forward — faster, harsher.

3. INT. ALEX'S BATHROOM - DAWN

Steam hazes the mirror. A windbreaker draped on the rack like a husk.

Alex towels off. Squares her shoulders in the glass. Drops them. Squares again, forcing it.

On the counter:

— Pill case: ANDROX - AM / PM

— Flyer: "Optimization Pop-Up Labs. Maximum You."

Phone buzzes:

— TESS (18): "u got this. coffee before 1st?"

— MOM: "Big day! Proud of you."

Alex palms a capsule.

— FLASH - INT. FAMILY BATHROOM - NIGHT (MEMORY)

Teen Alex, hands shaking, shears a lock of hair over the sink. Mom knocks through the door.

MOM O.S.
Honey? You okay?
Alex stares into a mirror that
won't line up with how she feels.

— BACK TO PRESENT

Alex swallows the capsule. Leans closer to the fogging mirror.

ALEX (WHISPER)
I'm Alex. That's it. That's enough.

Her shoulders SNAP taut, like strings pulled. She zips the windbreaker. Hood up.

4. INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Fluorescents HUM. Posters: BELONGING WEEK.

The PA SPEAKER crackles cheery... then detunes.

JACK (PA; calm, intimate)
Stand tall, Alex. I'll take it from here.

Students don't react. The PA snaps back to normal.

TESS, glitter eyeliner, messy bun, engulfs Alex in a hug.

TESS
You look good. Like, rested.
Did you rest?

ALEX
Define "rest."

A trio of MIC'D-UP KIDS pace backward, live-streaming.

KID #1
Alex, identity journey vlog?
Thoughts today?

TESS
Journey's closed for renovations.

PRINCIPAL COLLIER (50s, polished, shark smile) swoops in.

COLLIER
Assembly tomorrow. Ten minutes.
Twelve with applause.

ALEX
I didn't--

TESS
I signed you up. You'll crush it.

COLLIER
Perception saves budgets, Alex.
Help me save ours.

He glides off. Alex glares at Tess.

They pass a bulletin board: Alex's silhouette plastered on a poster. Slogan: BE YOU.
A discreet brand logo lingers in the corner.

Alex's jaw clenches.

5. INT. CAFETERIA - LUNCH

A hundred phones hover. Conversations buzz.

RING LIGHT flares in Alex's face —

— FLASH - INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM - DAY (MEMORY)

Alex frozen on a tiny stage. A cheap SPOTLIGHT burns. The crowd chants their name like a dare.

— BACK TO PRESENT

PODCASTER KID shoves a mic in.

PODCASTER KID
So... boy or girl today?

Alex freezes.

TESS
A person. Next question.

The kid laughs, keeps streaming.

COACH VAUGHN (30s, ex-jock, bulk gone to paunch) taps Alex's tray.

VAUGHN
Office after last period. Scouts
are sniffing.
(beat)
Stay focused. Be normal for the
visit.
(softening, almost kind)
You run like you're trying to
disappear, Reed.

He winks, struts off. Alex's fake smile crumbles.

6. INT. POP-UP "OPTIMIZATION LAB" - AFTERNOON

A neon terrarium: glowing plastic plants, ring lights, bottles lined like trophies.

DR. HUXLEY (30s), influencer-polished, beams into his phone.

HUXLEY
Family — today a brave soul joins
us: Alex Reed!

He kills the stream, voice dropping.

HUXLEY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Tell me what you want.

Alex glances at the mirror. Reflection – taller, sharper.

ALEX
Control. Confidence.
I decide who I am. Not them.

HUXLEY
Yes. Agency. Sovereignty.

He slides a sleek kit across: capsules, app login.

HUXLEY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Microdose. Track mood. Log dreams.
Stop only when I say.

Alex signs the tablet. He discreetly records her.

HUXLEY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
One message for our private group?

Alex straightens unnaturally, shoulders squared.

ALEX
I'm done performing for other
people.

Huxley beams. Jackpot.

7. EXT. HOMECOMING BONFIRE - NIGHT

Music POUNDS. Fire roars high.

Alex and Tess linger at the edge.

PODCASTER KID pushes a phone forward.

PODCASTER KID
Say something empowering!

Alex freezes.

A JOCK jeers:

JOCK
Which locker room you using?

The bonfire seems to inhale.

JAGGED CUTS — frames missing, sound distorted:
 — Jock's head WHIPS sideways.
 — Skull CRACKS on gravel.
 — Alex's fist, stone hard, clenched.

Screams erupt. Jock bleeding.

Alex stares at her hand. Bloodied.

TESS
 Alex — what did you—?

In her grip: the windbreaker cord, knotted. Perfect leverage.

A whisper curls inside the hood.

JACK (O.S.)
 Took the hit for you.

Alex staggers back. Fire CRACKLES on, cheerful.

8. INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Dark. Streetlight stripes the walls.

Phone BUZZES:
 "You SNAPPED???"
 "Hero?? Psycho???"

Alex opens the ANDROX app. Taps: STOP PROGRAM.

Ping. DM from Huxley:
 "Detox is dangerous. Ramp down. Proud of you. ✓ Dose logged."

The checkmark pulses though she hasn't taken anything.

She throws the phone. Stares at the window.

Her reflection SMILES, a beat late.

— DREAM: INT. AUDITORIUM — NIGHT

A podium. School banner. Jack at the mic, wearing Alex's hoodie like regalia.

JACK
 Perception saves budgets. I'll save you.

An audience of featureless masks nod in perfect unison. The ON AIR light burns above the stage.

Alex GASPS awake to darkness.

9. INT. PODCAST STUDIO - NEXT DAY

Foam-padded walls. Red ON AIR light glows.

PODCASTER KID leans into his mic, faux-earnest.

PODCASTER KID
So... boy or girl today?

Alex stiffens. The BOOM ARM creaks. Tape unspools like a snake.

ALEX
Please don't make me—

The ON AIR light sputters. FLICKERS. DIES.

SCREAMS erupt off-mic.

10. EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Police tape flaps. Ambulance lights spin.

Students cluster, filming.

Alex sits on the curb, dazed. Tess crouches beside her.

(TESS (urgent whisper)
Spay nothing. Just:
"I'm shaken. I need my mom.")

Detectives confer with VAUGHN, who casts quick, suspicious looks at Alex.

11. INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Mom drafts a Facebook post, glasses slipping.

MOM
We'll just say: tragic accident.
Standing strong. Proud of my Alex.

Alex shakes her head, hollow.

ALEX

Don't.

MOM

If we don't shape the story—

ALEX

I don't care.

MOM

I do.

(she forces a brittle
smile)

Friday we host a circle. Quiet.
Snacks. Listening.

Alex shrinks further into her chair.

12. INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Empty.

Coach Vaughn adjusts starting blocks.

His phone BUZZES: "Just be normal for the visit."

A socket wrench rolls to his feet.

VAUGHN

Who's there?

A SHADOW flickers.

SNAP! A tripwire jerks. Vaughn's leg YANKS sideways.

POP. Achilles ruptures. He SCREAMS.

The starting pistol CLATTERS, fires —

BANG. Lights DIE.

A whistle swings in the darkness.

13. INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Alex scrubs her hands raw in the sink. Foam dust everywhere.

In the cracked mirror, her REFLECTION stands taller.

JACK
Let me drive. You'll never hurt
again.

ALEX
Who are you?

The reflection's lips lag. Then:

JACK (IN HER VOICE)
We are.

Bulb HUMS. Alex SLAMS it dark.

14. INT. PRINCIPAL COLLIER'S OFFICE - DAY

COLLIER slides a rainbow-stamped DECK across his desk.
Alex's silhouette splashed on every page.

COLLIER
Narratives keep donors calm.
Help me keep ours breathing.

ALEX
I never agreed.

COLLIER
You don't need to.
You're already the story.

Alex shoves the deck back, storms out.

15. INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Water splashes. Alex grips the sink.

Her reflection tilts its head, mocking.

JACK
They're dressing you up.
Let me show them what's underneath.

ALEX
Shut up.

JACK
Say it right.

Together, overlapping:

JACK / ALEX (CONT'D)
Shut. Up.

Alex bolts. Faucet DRIPS.

16. INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Folding chairs. Cookies. Neighbors packed tight.

Mom beams.

MOM
We're here to hear Alex. To... hold
space.

NEIGHBOR
Is it true she attacked that boy?

PARENT
Our kids don't feel safe.

STUDENT
She's an inspiration.

Voices overlap, rising.

Alex curls inward.

In the bay window reflection - JACK grins.

JACK (O.S.)
Noise. I can quiet it.

17. INT. HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

Detectives lean over VAUGHN in his wheelchair.

DETECTIVE
Not fatal. But deliberate.

Vaughn's eyes flick toward Alex.

VAUGHN
Hooded figure. Could've been Reed.

Detective scribbles. Alex overhears, shaken.

18. EXT. SCHOOL QUAD - LUNCH

Tess shoves her phone at Alex.

Onscreen: an online store. Hoodies, mugs, phone cases – all stamped with Alex's silhouette.

TESS
Ally merch. Proceeds go to the
youth center.
You're helping people just by
existing.

Alex's face hardens.

ALEX
You sold me.

TESS
No – I made you untouchable.

ALEX
I never said yes.

A whisper slides under her breath.

JACK (O.S.)
She's cashing you out.

Alex jerks back, trembling.

19. INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

Students operate 3D printers, plastic hissing.

On one printer bed: a smooth, FEATURELESS FACEPLATE MASK.

Alex passes, distracted – doesn't notice.

JACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mask is freedom.

20. INT. ALEX'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alex paces with a capsule in hand.

Her reflection lounges smug in the mirror.

JACK (CONT'D)
She betrayed you. They all will.
But me? I'll never leave.

Alex hurls the capsule into the sink. Watches it spiral away.

ANDROX APP DINGS.
"✓ Dose logged."

She stares, horrified.

21. INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NEXT DAY

Phones flash. Students whisper - "killer" vs. "icon."

TikToks replay her bonfire fight. Merch spreads like wildfire.

Alex clutches her books until her hands shake.

22. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE POP-UP LAB - NIGHT

Alex storms toward the neon storefront, hood down.

Determined. Barely holding it together.

23. INT. OPTIMIZATION LAB - CONTINUOUS

HUXLEY greets her with polished smarm.

HUXLEY
Back already? The community adores
you.
Numbers doubled overnight.

Alex SLAMS the kit on the counter.

ALEX
I want out.

Huxley taps her consent video on a tablet.

HUXLEY
You're eighteen. Sovereign.
Withdrawal cold turkey? Dangerous.

Alex trembles.

ALEX
You're a fraud.

HUXLEY
I'm a mirror. Don't like what you
see?
That's not my problem.

Her reflection smirks in the glass.

JACK (O.S.)
Let me take this one.

24. EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Alex stumbles out, gasping.

Her hoodie faintly BLOODY.

Inside: neon flickers.

HUXLEY'S BODY hangs, impaled against the glowing HUXLEY SIGN.

Alex stares at her trembling hands.

Phone PINGS: "✓ Dose logged."

She drops it. Staggers away.

25. INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Curtains drawn. Mirror alive with cracks.

Jack leans out, confident, soothing.

JACK (CONT'D)
Face it. You like me.
I win arguments. I scare bullies.
I keep you alive.

ALEX
You ruin everything.

JACK
I fix what you're too weak to.

He leans close, tender.

JACK (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Day for you. Night for me. Fair
deal.

Alex SMASHES the mirror. Cracks spider. Her hand bleeds.

Jack grins through the fractures.

26. EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Reporters mob the gates. Police cars idle.

Detectives huddle with Vaughn in his wheelchair.

He points toward Alex.

27. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Lecture drones.

On laptops: Vaughn's testimony - "A hooded figure."

Murmurs ripple. Eyes cut toward Alex.

On her black laptop screen, her REFLECTION smirks.

28. EXT. QUAD - LUNCH

Tess grabs Alex, desperate.

TESS

You okay?

ALEX

Everyone thinks I'm a killer.

TESS

They need a villain. Or a mascot.

Alex glares, shows her phone - merch store trending.

ALEX

You made me a costume.

TESS

I thought - I was helping.

ALEX

You sold me.

A whisper undercuts.

JACK (O.S.)

Cut her loose.

Alex SHOVES Tess away.

29. INT. SCHOOL THEATER - NIGHT

Work lights glow blue.

Tess rehearses rigging alone.

FOOTSTEPS above.

TESS

Hello?

Silence. A hood cord twitches faintly.

She shivers, packs up, exits.

A SHADOW lingers overhead.

30. INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Alex bolts upright in bed. Hands BLOODY.

Phone BUZZES:

"Where's Tess?"

"Last seen at school."

Her reflection in the window grins wide.

JACK (O.S.)

One more to go.

31. INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mom pounds upstairs on Alex's locked door.

MOM

Police want to talk to you!

Alex sits at the kitchen table, staring at her hands.

A knock at the sliding glass door.

Her reflection stands outside. Hood cinched tight.
Breath fogging the pane.

She blinks — it's gone.

32. EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Detectives huddle. Vaughn wheels past.

DETECTIVE
Kid's unraveling.
It's only a matter of time.

33. INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Alex faces the cracked mirror.

ALEX
Where's Tess?

Jack leans forward, smug.

JACK
Safe. For now.

ALEX
If you touched her—

JACK
I already have.

Alex SCREAMS, smashes the glass.
In the shards, Jack LICKS her blood.

34. EXT. EMPTY STREET - NIGHT

Alex runs, hood down. Shop windows mirror her stride.

Reflections move a half-step ahead.

She collapses, sobbing.

JACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let me drive. You'll feel better.

ALEX
No.

JACK
Then she dies.

35. INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Emergency lights flicker.

Chalk scuffs guide Alex forward – Tess's stagehand marks.

PA system CRACKLES.

JACK (PA) (CONT'D)
Be the director of your biology.
I'm the director now.

Alex steels herself, pushes into the theater.

ACT III

36. INT. SCHOOL THEATER - NIGHT

Vast, cavernous. Empty seats yawning.

A harsh SPOTLIGHT ignites.

Suspended from the fly system: TESS. Bound. Gagged. Alive.

ALEX
Tess!

FOOTSTEPS thunder above.

37. CATWALK - CONTINUOUS

JACK steps into the light. Smooth FACEPLATE MASK gleams.

JACK
Every story needs a villain.
And I wear the mask better than you
ever wore the hero.

38. STAGE - BELOW

Alex looks up, voice trembling.

ALEX
You're not real.

JACK
I'm everything you wanted.
Confident. Ruthless. Unbreakable.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

(beat)

Let me finish her. Then no one will
touch you again.

Tess moans against the gag.

39. THEATER - SEQUENCE

Alex darts through aisles. Sneakers echo.
Above, Jack mirrors her on the catwalk, predator pacing.

JACK (PA) (CONT'D)

Run, little final girl. The
monster's already inside you.

40. CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Alex slams switches. SPOTLIGHTS blaze jagged beams.
Jack's silhouette stretches HUGE on the back wall.
Tess dangles in the glare, marionette-like.

41. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Alex grips a stage baton. Eyes the counterweights.

ALEX

Tess! Trust me!

Tess nods faintly, working the tape.

42. CATWALK - CONTINUOUS

Jack leans over the railing.

JACK

You think you can kill me?
I am you.

43. STAGE - SHOWDOWN

Alex steps into the aisle. Voice shaky, but loud.

ALEX
I don't need to kill you.
I just need to show you.

A look to Tess — a pact.

ALEX (calling)
On my count!

Tess gnaws the gag loose.

TESS (HOARSE)
Stage right — fly five!

Alex lunges, YANKS a rope. A sandbag SCREAMS past Jack — he dodges, laughing.

TESS (LOUDER) (CONT'D)
Kill the front wash! Make him look
at himself!

44. CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Switches SLAM. HOUSE LIGHTS to brutal white.
The FACEPLATE's gleam WARPS HUGE across the back wall.

45. CATWALK

Jack falters, blinded.
Tess KICKS the rig, the line jumps — buying Alex a step.

46. STAGE - CLIMAX

SMASH! Baton shatters the mask.
Underneath: Alex's face, twisted, sneering.

JACK
You really can be me.

ALEX
No.
(to Tess)
We can be us.

Alex YANKS the counterweight; Tess DROPS her weight perfectly
timed —
the sandbag SLAMS Jack.

He topples backward, arms flailing — SWALLOWED by the red curtain.

47. STAGE - AFTERMATH

Alex cuts Tess free. They collapse together.

TESS (SPENT)
No more selling you. No more saving
me.
Together or not at all.

Alex takes her hand.

48. EXT. SCHOOL - DAWN

Police lights. Reporters swarming.

COLLIER at microphones, ready to spin.

MOM steps forward, shaky but steady.

MOM
My kid isn't your fundraiser.
(to cameras)
Alex doesn't owe you a speech, a
label, or a brand.
(to Alex)
I'm sorry I tried to package you.
I'm done.

Collier's smile cracks.

The press murmurs stall just enough for Alex and Tess to slip past.

49. INT. RUNNING STORE - EVENING

Chime RINGS. Hooded CUSTOMER enters.
Stride — a half-step ahead.

Alex's eyes lift to the mirror wall.
Her reflection SMILES — a beat too late.

The hood tilts back. The FACEPLATE gleams.

Silence. Fluorescents HUM.

Alex instinctively fists up — then lowers her hands.

Breath slows. A choice.

— FLASH — EXT. SUBURBAN STREET — PRE-DAWN (ECHO)

Younger Alex reaches for a dropped relay baton.

Laughter. A shadow wins by a half-step.

— BACK TO STORE

ALEX (QUIET)
I'm not running.

A micro-tilt in the mask, confused by the lack of pursuit.

JACK (O.S.)
Relax. I've got this.

Alex's inhale steadies rather than spikes.

SMASH TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: THEY / THEM