

## COVERAGE

<b>TITLE: Branded</b>	<b>AUTHOR: Christian Lybrook</b>
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<b>SUBMITTED TO: Carolyn Kras</b>	<b>SUBMITTED BY: N/A</b>
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<b>PRODUCER: N/A</b>	<b>DIRECTOR: N/A</b>
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<b>LOCATION: Idaho</b>	<b>GENRE: Mystery</b>
<b>DATE: 2/11/19</b>	<b>READER: Olivia Szymanski</b>

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**LOGLINE: A detective investigates the murder of a prominent wealthy Mormon family, who appear to have been hiding something.**  
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### CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

DETECTIVE ISABELA QUINTANA: (41) – State detective working on the Tinden murder case. Quintana is focused and level-headed when it comes to her work, but is struggling to handle her problems with her marriage and family. She’s perceptive, clever, and professional.

DETECTIVE DREW WILLIAMS: (34) – Rule-follower, clean-cut. Local detective Williams is first jealous of Quintana, who was brought in by the state. However, he cooperates with her begrudgingly.

RUDY STROM: (65) – Lives on a ranch in the mountains. Works in the Brand Inspection Unit of the Idaho State Police. Straightforward attitude, and a bit stubborn. He is exhibiting signs of Parkinson’s, but refuses to go to the specialist doctor. Inspects the case of the cattle that were skinned alive.

CARLOS CACERES: (53) – Groundsman for the Tindens, and found the murdered family. A suspect, because he didn’t call the police until an hour after he found them. There is a photo of him in Uruguay, wearing a neckerchief and a ring that was found near the skinned cattle. He also has connections to the ulu found to have skinned the cattle.

JC PENNEY MAN: (35) – Murders MIKEY CROSS to send a message from someone. Seems to be some sort of hitman. He's cold and blunt, but his attire (JC Penney) gives him a strange familiarity.

LORETTA: (reads as 50s) – The dispatcher. Talks to Rudy over the CB, and seems to genuinely care about his wellbeing.

FRANK: (53) – Foreman at the Armour Slaughterhouse. Gruff, knows Rudy well.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY: (25) – Shoots the bull at the slaughterhouse. Young, and eager (which leads to him shooting the bull too soon).

OFFICER KWON: (28) – Another officer at the scene of the murder. Chooses QUINTANA over WILLIAMS to investigate an object.

RAFA: (12) – QUINTANA'S son. Rafa seems to be a good kid at heart, but holds some resentment for his mom, who divorced his dad and remarried a woman. He's also frustrated that he keeps getting left behind with PHIL, his stepmom, while Quintana is away for work. He gets into a fight at school and gets beat up.

PHILIPPA/ PHIL KLUSKEY: (38) – QUINTANA'S wife. Phil loves her wife, but is getting increasingly more frustrated with her, as she's never home and bailed on counseling. There's a strong sense of familiarity in their relationship, but it's tense at the moment.

JAVI: (reads as late 30s) – QUINTANA'S ex-husband. Javi is apparently not present in RAFA'S life, but it is suggested that he slept with Quintana recently.

RYAN HOLLAND: (40) – Bishop in the Church of the Latter Day Saints. Handsome, reassuring to SARAH while she makes her testimony.

FATHER MARK: (48) – Religious. Cooperates with RUDY to show him the images of CACERES that connect him to the cattle.

SARAH CROSS: (16) – Pretty teenaged girl in the Church. Nervous, timid, religious.

ALMA CROSS: (39) – SARAH's mother. Lives on the ranch. Suspiciously opens a letter full of 500 one-dollar bills.

MIKEY CROSS: (22) – Confident, cocky, and hiding something. Murdered by JC PENNEY MAN.

JOSHUA CROSS: (23) – Unkempt appearance. Suspiciously watches the Tinden house during the investigation.

TYLER SIMMONS: (20) – MIKEY’s cousin. Submissive to Mikey.

KIRK SPENCER: (38) – Auctioneer. Helps RUDY with his investigation into the cattle. Family man.

DR. MALPANI: (35) – Doctor who tells RUDY that he needs to get tested for Parkinson’s. Patient, but insistent.

DETECTIVE LOGAN: (46) – Brings up RUDY’s past, which leads to him getting punched in the face.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: (reads as 50s) – Typical small-town police captain. Older, authoritative, but knows everyone in the ton.

BEKAH TINDEN: (37) – Oldest daughter of Charles and Leslie. Left the church, and was estranged from her family.

ELDON TINDEN: (57) – Younger brother of Charles Tinden. Works at Wallpaper World.

LESLIE TINDEN: (62) – Murdered at Tinden house.

CHARLES TINDEN: (64) – Murdered at Tinden house. Ring finger cleaved from hand.

WARREN TINDEN: (43) – Murdered Tinden house. Son of Charles and Leslie.

MATTINGLY TINDEN: (39) – Murdered. Wife of Warren.

**SYNOPSIS:**

The episode opens with a teaser, which shows 16 year old SARAH CROSS giving a testimony before a Mormon church gathering. She talks about the LESLIE and CHARLES TINDEN, members of the church who have been murdered. Simultaneously, there is a cross cut to a figure walking down the hallway where the Tindens and their son WARREN lay dead. There is a third cross cut to a figure called JC PENNEY MAN, approaching an apartment with a shotgun. The teaser ends.

Cut to RUDY, an older brand inspector for the Idaho State Police. He’s working on building his house when he gets a call from the dispatcher, LORETTA, who tells him to get to the Armour Slaughterhouse. FRANK, the foreman, has a bull who got loose and went on a rampage. The SHERIFF’S DEPUTY has shot the bull twice, which only injured it. Rudy shoots it behind the ear, and reprimands the deputy for shooting the wrong part of the bull.

At the Tinden House, the investigation has begun. The house is swarming with cops, and forensics teams are taking photos while a body bag is wheeled out. A police officer is interviewing CARLOS CACERES, the groundskeeper. Detectives QUINTANA and

WILLIAMS start discussing what they know. A finger has been cleaved off one of the victim's hands. The Tinden family is in good standing with the community and the church, and there are no obvious suspects. State Detective Quintana is clearly taking the lead, which irritates local Detective Williams, who has been working on this case since dawn. Quintana dismisses him, and they continue investigating, despite the clear tension.

In the basement, they find rectangular outline in the dusty closet where some object once was. Instead, there is a note that says "Thanks. This didn't belong to you anyway." Williams texts an unknown number, "Found closet." He sends the text and then deletes it. The scene ends on JOSHUA CROSS, looking at the house suspiciously.

Rudy is called in to a field where a pack of cattle are meandering. They're skinned from rib to rump, but are still alive. Their identification tags have been torn out. He starts to investigate.

Quintana is moving into the local precinct. She gets a call from her son, RAFA, asking her where she is. He complains about PHIL, his stepmom, and Quintana asks him to behave for her. He hangs up.

Across town, MIKEY CROSS and TYLER SIMMONS, cousins, drive down the main street. Mikey is on the phone with JOSHUA, his brother, who he hasn't heard from in months. A group of girls, including LINDSAY MCSHAY, pass the car. Mikey and Tyler flirt with them, while Josh hangs up. The car behind them honks, but the cousins stay to talk to the girls. The tattooed driver gets out of his car and punches MIKEY in the mouth, who smiles. Tyler gets a call telling him about the murders, and Mikey responds that they got what they deserved. They drive away.

The next morning, Rudy is doing research on cattle brands. Quintana tries to disprove Williams' assumption that the Tinden's didn't have any enemies. She meets him at his son's soccer game to question him about 714 Jefferson Street, an address that was left off the door-to-door report for the investigation. The house belongs to ELDON TINDEN< Charles' brother.

Rudy continues to investigate. Quintana calls Phil, her wife, who tells her that Rafa got into a fight at school. The women argue, and it becomes clear that Phil is resentful. Quintana is never home, and she refuses to go to couple's therapy.

Quintana is called back to the Tinden house, which has been broken into. It's BEKAH TINDEN, daughter of Charles and Leslie. She tells Quintana that her parents must have had enemies, because of their money. Bekah left the church 17 years ago, and has been estranged since. Bekah suspects that the rectangular imprint in the closet was probably a safe full of silver, because her parents didn't trust banks. She also leads the detectives to a survival bunker.

Meanwhile, Rudy wonders if the cattle were skinned to get rid of a branding, so that they could be sold. While he's investigating, he suddenly falls over and collapses into the dirt.

Later, he finds himself at the hospital, where DR. MALPANI tells him that he needs to get examined for Parkinson's Disease. Rudy refuses, and walks out.

Quintana and Williams pay a visit to Eldon Tinden. Before arriving, Quintana receives a text with bible verses from an unknown number. At Eldon's workplace, Wallpaper World, Quintana can see on his computer that he's looking at a spreadsheet with Hoyt Kingston's total holdings, which total \$30.2 million. He minimizes the tab.

Eldon gives information that conflicts with what the police know. He claims that he was distant from his brother, and that money drove them apart. The detectives leave, with Kingston as a new lead – he died twenty years ago, so why is he being paid \$30 million?

Quintana receives a text from JAVI, the father of her child, insinuating that they might have slept together recently.

At the Crossbar Ranch, Sarah's mother ALMA CROSS opens the mailbox to find an envelope full of 500 one-dollar bills. She puts it in her apron and hurries away.

At the police station, Williams has discovered the murder weapon – an ulu, an Eskimo knife used to skin animals. On the open range, Rudy finds a gold ring in the field where the cattle were found. He goes to FATHER MARK, who shows him a photo of the man wearing the ring. It's Carlos Caceres. He phones Loretta, who tells him that Caceres is at the station.

Quintana and Williams are interrogating Caceres. He found the Tinden family, but only called the police an hour later. Rudy arrives at the precinct, and gets into a physical fight with Detective Logan, who mentions that Rudy was inebriated the last time he was at the station. CAPTAIN HUGHES takes Rudy aside, and then allows him to enter the interrogation with Quintana and Williams.

Then, there is cross cutting between Sarah giving her testimony at the Church of the Latter Day Saints (the same speech from the teaser) and Mikey and Tyler playing video games. There's a knock at their door, and when Mikey opens it, he is shot in the forehead. JC Penney Man enters, and shoots Tyler in the leg as he tries to flee. Tyler apologizes for stealing the money, which is assumed to be from the safe inside the Tinden house. JC Penney Man replies that all they want is for Tyler to come home. Tyler blacks out, and JC Penney Man exits. The final shot lands on a skull earring, which we have seen before – in a photo in Rudy's office. It's his daughter, VICTORIA,

#### **COMMENTS:**

This pilot is complex, beginning multiple storylines that will seemingly intersect later in the season. Though hard to follow at times, it sets up a lot of opportunities for twists and revelations throughout a season.

The cast is a mix of interesting characters, with a range of ages and identities. The one that seems the most fleshed out is Rudy Strom; his stubbornness and denial about his

disease gives dimension to the inspector, who also seems to work alone. His investigation of the skinned animals was the most interesting to read, and he has potential to grow into a bigger character.

Isabela Quintana appears to be the protagonist of the show, but doesn't feel completely finished. We learn that she has a son, Rafa, and a wife (nicknamed Phil.) The reveal of Phil to be a woman (Philippa) was meant to surprise the viewer, but Quintana's sexuality would have more integrity if it were just stated instead of used for shock value. We learn about Quintana's family dynamics, and watch her as a determined detective, but she seems to still be lacking some key character qualities that would make her feel whole.

The setting of the Mormon church is really interesting and engaging. The juxtaposition of the church scenes with the murders is chilling and intriguing. The presence of the religion brings an edge to what would otherwise be a typical murder mystery. The JC Penney Man's specificity also helps to distinguish this pilot as something different.

The dialogue is also generally pretty specific to the Idaho setting, though sometimes drops the dialect in places. However, the dialogue is choppy, and the flow could be improved.

The presence of the skinned cattle and the Eskimo knife also bring interesting details to the story. There's a sense of ritual, in some way – almost supernatural, but not quite.

Though there are many interesting storylines, there is so much cutting that the script is hard to read. The storylines switch back and forth so often, that it is hard to develop a clear sense of what is happening at any given time.

Overall, the strongest aspect of this pilot is its sense of place and atmosphere.

#### **SUITABILITY FOR CONTINUATION:**

Right now, I would not recommend this series for continuation.

While the pilot offers an interesting premise for the first season, I wonder if there is enough content to sustain a multi-season series. Would we continue with Quintana's storyline as a detective, and follow her through different cases? Or would we stay with the church and whatever mystery is behind the murders? If it were to remain within the church, there will have to be a storyline that can extend beyond the Tinden murders. The pilot suggests that there is one, so if there is enough content, it would be interesting. It would depend on where it would go after the first season concludes.