

HEATHENS

Written by

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INT. 1998 FORD SEDAN - DAY

SADIE, a 15-year-old with deep eyes and worry lines above her nose, sits in the passenger seat of the parked car, listening to music from her phone.

EXT. BOX ELDER ROAD, GILLETTE, WYOMING - DAY

Sadie walks around kicking dust off the ground. She's in a floral-print dress but going nowhere.

Rising above her right shoulder is ten feet of chain-link and razor wire.

She wanders past a sign: CAMPBELL COUNTY DETENTION CENTER.

Sadie turns and faces off into the distance. Flat-topped hills roll away in all directions, dead grass blasted yellow and brown by a long, waterless summer.

SOME MINUTES LATER

Sadie walks back towards the car. From far off she sees her mother, LORNA, standing by, talking on the phone. Her purse propped on the roof.

Lorna sees Sadie coming and ends the conversation. A hand quickly goes in the air, as if to say, "I've been waiting for days."

Wordlessly, Sadie tosses her mother the car keys and continues to the passenger side.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lorna and Sadie drive home through sparse country.

LORNA
Your daddy says hello.

Sadie continues to stare out the window, as if her mother hadn't spoken.

LORNA (CONT'D)
That man.

Lorna makes a turn.

LORNA (CONT'D)
I'm gonna have to drop you off so I
can run an errand.
(MORE)

LORNA (CONT'D)

If I give you money can you buy some notebooks and things for your brothers and sisters?

SADIE

Are you gonna pick me up?

LORNA

I don't know, Sadie, you might have to walk home.

SADIE

Ok.

LORNA

Thank you. There's twenty dollars in my purse there. You take that and make sure you get enough back-to-school for everybody. Except Walker. He likes to choose his own, and he'll throw a fit I don't go with him. You can buy a soda with the change but that's it. And don't you dare catch a ride home unless it's someone I know.

SADIE

Yeah.

EXT. DEVELOPMENT ROAD - DAY

Sadie walks along the side of the road, carrying a bag full of school supplies and a pack of magazines.

She stops to pet A DOG coming the other way.

She passes A FEW MEN sitting on a porch, smoking and drinking. Nervously, she tries to smooth the bottom of her dress down and hunch into her body.

EXT. SADIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sadie arrives at her own front yard, where WALKER, the youngest of her siblings, is peeing on the bushes.

JESSIE, 17, lies on the roof in short-shorts and a sports bra. Jessie's fraternal twin JAY can be seen lifting weights in the garage, where he seems to have set up a makeshift bedroom. Last is ELLEN, 12 years old, who sits in her second-storey bedroom window, waving down to Sadie.

The split-level house sits at the end of a subdivision that appears to have been abandoned mid-development. Grasses grow wild beyond the borders of their yard.

WALKER
Sadie looks old.

ELLEN
She looks pretty.

JESSIE
Who told you you could wear my
dress?

SADIE
Mind your own business.

JESSIE
My dress is my business.

WALKER
Whatchya dressed up for?

JAY
Sadie went to see her dad.

WALKER
Sadie, does your daddy -

ELLEN
Shut up, Walker.

INT. SADIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sadie lies awake in her bed.

She rolls over to see Jessie still asleep in hers.

Sadie creeps over to look out the window. Lorna's car is parked on the road. TWO KIDS are sneaking off to the once-raised but never finished plots of the conjectured neighborhood.

Below, Sadie can hear the sounds of scraping feet, as Lorna moves restlessly about the kitchen.

Truck lights turn into the subdivision. They halt for a moment. A MAN emerges from passenger side, and a second later, the truck turns and heads back towards the access road.

Sadie watches the top of the man's head as he heaves himself towards the house.

Below, she hears her mother rush to the door to greet him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLAYTON, sunburnt and softly bearded, looks like he may fall asleep head-first into the warmed-up potatoes Lorna's put in front of him.

CLAYTON
How'd you think I was gonna take
it?

Lorna leans in, one hand wrapped around a steaming mug, and the other reaching out for Clayton's.

LORNA
I knew it'd hurt you. But I knew
you'd see the goodness of it. I
knew you had room in that big heart
of yours. You already opened it up
and you put Sadie inside.

CLAYTON
This is different.

LORNA
I know.

CLAYTON
It's not because I'm un-generous.

Clayton picks at his food.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
It's a bad idea. I mean even if he
weren't what he was. You look at
the age. Once you're carved out
there's no way of fitting you back
in with the rest. You don't take a
wild horse and pasture it with your
mares and geldings. You don't put
it with your foals.

Lorna makes big eyes at him.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
He's old enough to find somewhere
else his own.

LORNA
He's mine, Clayton. He'll always be
mine.

She takes his hand.

LORNA (CONT'D)

What you do to the least of these,
you do to me.

CLAYTON

He ain't the least of us.

LORNA

This family can't stay propped up
on your shoulders. You don't see
the difference because we save to
keep things right when you're home.
You know half Jessie's friends are
leaving for Laramie next week. She
doesn't say a word about it to me,
but I know what it's gonna do to
her. Jay's already talking like he
and his buddies are gonna be
wearing Cowboy gold. But hell, we
haven't even got but one car since
May.

CLAYTON

I told you I'm working on --

LORNA

He's got his own truck, Clay.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Sadie shakes out a white bedsheet and spreads it on a
mattress.

All around, her siblings clean and re-arrange the garage,
which has lately been Jay's bedroom.

JAY

Obvious answer: Dad's kicked out of
bed.

ELLEN

Why would he be kicked out of bed.

JESSIE

He snores too loud.

JAY

Yeah, or D-I-V-O-R-C-E numero
three.

ELLEN

Dude, I can fucking spell.

Jessie hits Jay.

JAY

You don't have to lie to her.

ELLEN

If Dad's angry he'll sleep at Riley's, so that's stupid anyway.

JESSIE

Well, that's true.

SADIE

And if mom's pissed, she's not gonna buy him new sheets.

JAY

Double true.

Ellen hops on the bed, Sadie is trying to make.

ELLEN

Maybe we're having a guest.

JESSIE

Probably a lodger.

Sadie shoos Ellen off.

ELLEN

What?

JESSIE

Like someone who pays to stay here.

SADIE

Who would pay to stay here?

JAY

Nah-uh. It's gonna be a foreign exchange student. Like Briana Reiter had this really tall German girl last year who used to tan naked in their back yard until Briana's mom caught her.

JESSIE

Stefanie didn't tan naked.

Sadie stares at the reindeer pattern on the quilt she has stretched out on the bed. Her brow is wrinkled again.

JAY

Oh, really, cos Devin and Chris saw her.

JESSIE

They just wish they saw her.

JAY

Of course they wish they saw her, she was a mountain of molten hot lava, man. She was five alarm chili. Deutschland über alle.

SADIE

I think it's something to do with my dad.

The chatter stops for a second. Sadie's siblings look at her. A LAWN-MOWER BUZZES outside.

JESSIE

That actually makes total sense.

ELLEN

Is he coming home?

SADIE

I don't know. I don't think so.

Sadie sits down on the newly made bed. Her hand glides to rest atop the pristine pillow-case.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sadie sits at the table with Lorna and Clayton.

LORNA

It's nothing bad.

CLAYTON

Your older brother and sister, the little guys, they're gonna know about it, too.

LORNA

We just wanted to start with you.

They look at Sadie as if expecting her to say something.

LORNA (CONT'D)

Before I had you. Well, I'd known your father a long time.

(MORE)

LORNA (CONT'D)

And we were real good friends from the start. Always close. And one day I figured out I was gonna have a baby. And I wasn't ready. Your daddy wasn't ready, neither. So when the baby was born, we gave him up. To some nice people, who were ready. Do you understand?

Sadie barely nods, her brow knit.

CLAYTON

Your brother's coming to live here. He's gonna live with us.

LORNA

He's too old to stay -- where he grew up. I don't think life's been very easy for him.

Again, they look to her as if waiting for a response.

LORNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I never told you all this, sweetie. You can be upset with me much as you want.

Nothing.

LORNA (CONT'D)

His name's Cameron.

SADIE

Does he know about me?

INT. SADIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The last hour of a long summer evening. Sadie looks out the window, watching cars crawl down from the horizon.

A dark green truck comes closer and closer to their house, slowing down as it passes. Sadie looks away.

Soon the truck returns, going in the opposite direction. Even slower this time, it comes to a stop outside the house.

From below, Sadie hears her sister shout:

ELLEN (O.S.)

He's here! Mama, he's here! Sadie, your brother's here!

LORNA (O.S.)
Everybody come on downstairs.

EXT. SADIE'S HOUSE - DAY

The door slams on the green truck, and CAMERON, a tall adolescent with a strong jawline and two-days' fuzz, approaches the family gathered on the lawn.

A few steps away from the truck, he pauses and buttons his checked shirt closer to the top, runs a hand through his hair.

Lorna rushes out to hug him, with Clayton following behind less certainly.

Sadie shuffles sideways two steps for every half-step forward, her hands in her pockets. She catches the end of Clayton giving her brother a handshake and tentative slap on the shoulder.

Then Lorna sweeps Cameron on for introductions.

LORNA
All right that little menace is
Walker. Walker, you shake your
brother's hand -- like a grown-up?

Walker extends an enthusiastic hand, shouting his name at the stranger. Ellen follows quickly on his heels, introducing herself before Lorna has the chance to steal her thunder.

ELLEN
I'm Ellen. It's a pleasure to meet
you.

CAMERON
Nice to meet you, Ellen. I like
your hair.

ELLEN
Thank you.

Cameron catches sight of Sadie slinking behind her siblings. His face changes as he sees her.

Jay shoves to the front.

JAY
How you doin, Cameron, my name's
Jay.

CAMERON
I'm good, Jay, how 'bout you?

JAY
Can't complain. Except you took my garage. But I'm glad you're here.

CAMERON
Thank, Jay. I appreciate it.

JAY
You don't tan naked, do you?

Cameron makes a slight move towards Sadie, but is cut off by Jessie, who wraps him in a full-on hug.

JESSIE
Welcome home, Cameron.

CAMERON
Oh, hey, you're, uh -

JESSIE
Jessica.

CAMERON
Oh, right. Jessie. It's good to meet you.

Now Cameron reaches Sadie. He holds a hand out, while looking straight in her eyes. His voice comes slowly.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Hank's daughter?

She nods.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
It's nice to meet you.

Lorna comes rushing in, shoving them towards the door.