

WILDER

Written by

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EXT. BUZZARD ROOST REGISTER - DOWNTOWN LUCEDALE - DAY

Cars line the street. Christmas lights hang, three months later. Poverty, rural decay stick out like sore thumbs.

A big bodied Lincoln lingers. Steam flows from the exhaust.

SOPHIE (V.O.)

Ever have something--some part of
your life you just can't seem to
figure out?

INT. SOPHIE'S CAR - DAY

SOPHIE WATERS (20s) - brunette, Miss Whatever-High-School
with a busted crown - stares at the front of the building.

SOPHIE (V.O.)

That's what it's like living in a
small town. Same things happen. Day
after day. Night after night.

On the dash. A curled picture of her with two kids. She
stares at the glove box--

SOPHIE (V.O.)

It's like a bad wash cycle--where
every time you put the dirties in,
they come out dirtier than when you
started.

She rustles past a college diploma. A pack of Camel's. She
strikes her lighter. A cool puff.

A dozen donuts on the seat, Sophie spelled in neat marker.

SOPHIE

I can't deal with this shit today.

She rolls down the window, tosses the donuts on the sidewalk,
drives away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRAILER - NIGHT

Shag carpet. Scattered debris, toys, beer cans. Couch
cushions askew. An ashtray, more butts out than in.

SOPHIE (V.O.)

To be honest, I don't want to deal
with this either.

Sophie screams from the bedroom--

INT. HALLWAY - TRAILER - NIGHT

A paneling-lined hall. Pressboard doors shut tight.

SOPHIE (V.O.)
But there's some comfort in the
familiar--even when it ain't good.

More screams. Louder.

A door creaks. KYLE WATERS (10) - brown hair, Voltron pajamas
- peeks out.

KYLE
Mom?

He steps out, stares at the closed bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM - TRAILER - NIGHT

No better than the living room. In fact, a mite worse.

DAVID WATERS (30s) - blonde, crazed eyes even when he's happy
- straddles Sophie on the bed, grabs her wrist.

DAVID
Hold still!

Sophie squirms, kicks, screams.

SOPHIE
Get the fuck off me!

A foot finds his chest. She shoves. David falls back. This is
her break. She flees into the bathroom, locks the door.

SOPHIE (V.O.)
My grandma always preached that no
one person is either all good or
all bad--

David rushes to the bathroom door, taps with an crazed smile.

DAVID
Come on, Sophie. Open up. I'll be
good. I promise.

INT. BATHROOM - TRAILER - NIGHT

Sophie digs under the sink, finds it, stands to reveal a
large butcher's knife.

SOPHIE
 (to the camera)
 But evil--She said that shit is to
 the bone.

David pounds the door. The handle rattles. Sophie backs away,
 knife at the ready.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
 You lay another hand on me David
 Waters and I swear to God--

INT. HALLWAY - TRAILER - NIGHT

Kyle stands at the bedroom door, knocks.

KYLE
 Mom? Are you okay?

He grabs the knob, turns. It's locked.

INT. BATHROOM - TRAILER - NIGHT

It's quiet. Too quiet. Sophie sets the knife on the sink.

SOPHIE
 It's okay, baby! Mommy's okay! Go
 back to bed!

She reaches for the doorknob, grabs it, pauses.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
 (to the camera)
 You know what the difference
 between a mama and a soldier are?

Sophie turns the knob, opens the door. David stands there,
 ready to pounce.

SOPHIE (V.O.)
 Nothing.

David lurches, knocks Sophie into the bathtub, and leaps on
 top of her.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BUZZARD ROOST REGISTER - DOWNTOWN LUCEDALE - NEXT DAY

Several small desks and an editors' office. Papers teeter.
 Typewriters silent, ready to start the day.

Sophie circles typos on a manuscript with a red pen. She sets it down, studies it.

Laughter from the water cooler. Sophie stands, observes--

JESSIE COLLINS (30s) - short black hair, Biker Barbie with a convertible LeBaron - leans in a pencil skirt.

She waves at Sophie, smiles. A repugnant smile.

SOPHIE

Bitch.

Sophie waves, smiles back, the smile you wear when you want to burn the building down but can't lose the paycheck.

Jessie approaches. That bitch even walks elegant.

JESSIE

Hey, girl!

An accent of sweet tea instead of saliva.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

How are you? Did you do somethin' different with your hair?

Sophie teases the tight curls, the split ends at the tip.

SOPHIE

I switched conditioners.

Jessie laughs.

JESSIE

Oh my goodness. You're adorable.

Playfully slaps Sophie's arm.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

You haven't changed one bit since high school. Bless your heart.

Sophie stands, fist balled.

EDITOR (O.S.)

Collins. Waters. In my office.

Jessie looks past Sophie, as always.

JESSIE

Comin', shug.

The papers on the desk.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 We gonna need you to hurry up and
 get these finished--

Another fucking smile.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 --M'kay?

Jessie walks away, Sophie right behind.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE - BUZZARD ROOST REGISTER - DAY

ED NAPIER (50s) - editor, fat, tight curls, continuously
 smells like onions - stands beside his desk.

Jessie enters, wraps him in a tight hug.

JESSIE
 Ed, darlin'--how's it you get more
 handsome every day?

She laughs, turns. Ed laughs like a schoolboy.

ED
 Good genes I reckon.

Sophie enters.

SOPHIE
 Good morning, Ed.

Ed frowns, sits behind his desk.

ED
 What's with the plain Jane look?

Sophie opens her mouth.

ED (CONT'D)
 Never mind. I don't care.

He grabs some papers, sifts through them.

ED (CONT'D)
 Where were you yesterday?

SOPHIE
 Sick. I brought the donuts.

ED

Yeah. We got what was left of 'em.
A dog, racoon, something ate most
of 'em.

He leans forward, arms crossed on his desk.

ED (CONT'D)

The donuts are an important job,
Sophie. And poor Jessie here had to
proofread her own article.

Back to the papers.

ED (CONT'D)

If you can't take journalism
seriously--

SOPHIE

Journalism? I'm a secretary with an
Ole Miss degree.

He's heard the gripe before.

ED

Ah. Here it is.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He points to a headline.

ED (CONT'D)

See that?

Jessie picks up the paper. Sophie leans to read the headline:
ELI WILDER CALLING IT QUILTS. Sophie snatches it.

SOPHIE

Is this for real?

ED

It's in the paper, ain't it?

JESSIE

So what, Ed. Who cares?

Ed walks to the wall, brushes the Editor of the Year award.

ED

It could just be that yours truly
got us an exclusive with him.

SOPHIE

An exclusive? With Eli Wilder?

JESSIE
Who's Eli Wilder?

Sophie stands, unable to contain herself.

SOPHIE
Who's Eli Wilder? Only the best
driver to ever get behind the wheel
of a stock car. That's who.

Ed pumps his hands.

ED
Just--sit down.

Sophie sits.

ED (CONT'D)
Are you up to the task?

SOPHIE
Boy, am I?

ED
Not you. Her. Jessie?

Jessie tosses the paper on the desk.

JESSIE
Sure. I guess. When?

Ed reaches in his desk, grabs a folder, hands it to Jessie.

ED
Day after tomorrow.

Jessie picks up the envelope, walks out without a word.
Sophie stands, follows--

ED (CONT'D)
Hold it a minute.

--turns--

ED (CONT'D)
Sit down.

--sits. He leans in, can see the bruise under the concealer.

ED (CONT'D)
Look--I ain't blind, alright. I see
the bruises. I know it's tough.

Ed walks around the desk, leans.

SOPHIE

I want my shot, Ed.

ED

Then you're gonna have to earn it like the rest of us. Quit complaining. Grow some balls. Do what's asked of you.

SOPHIE

Very poetic, Ed. You make that up?

Ed walks to the door, holds it for her.

ED

Miss work again and I'm cuttin' you loose. Understand?

Sophie nods, leaves the office.