

"The Wilding"

CARLOS^{5.}

Margaret's usually worked up and right now's no different --

MARGARET
Your business is your business.

6ppg.

Hands on the wheel, Margaret turns to --

KAYLA HAYES (17), her daughter in the backseat. Overwhelmed by the schedule in her hand, the backpack in her lap, the first day of school since she can remember. But she tries to play it cool.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
Anyone pushes you on what school you're coming from, tell 'em to fuck off. I mean, not like that, but you know what I mean.

KAYLA
Please watch the road.

Margaret turns the wheel sharp, catching a curb.

In the passenger seat, her husband, CARLOS FERNANDEZ (30s), snaps up from grading American history exams. Latino, not Kayla's dad. A fully recovered addict, he's non-judgmental to a fault.

As Margaret cuts off another car --

CARLOS
(jokes to Kayla)
We should look into getting you a learner's permit.

Kayla ignores him, distracted by the high school looming up ahead. Carlos notices her nerves.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
(to Margaret)
Why don't you pull over here.

MARGARET
The entrance is up --

CARLOS
Here's fine.
(to Kayla)
Don't need us old farts walking you to the front door, right?

Margaret gets it, pulls to the curb. Kayla smiles at Carlos, appreciative.

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start →
#1

MARGARET

You're doing great on the Zyprexa.
But you go dizzy, get the sweats,
anything, you call me.

KAYLA

No cellphones allowed in school.
Says so in the handbook.

MARGARET

Find a stall, under the bleachers,
but you call me... That's good you
know the rules.

KAYLA

I can read.

MARGARET

You're ready? You're going to do
great.

KAYLA

Bye mom.
(to Carlos)
You coming?

CARLOS

Go on ahead. I'll see you inside
the halls of doom.

Before Margaret can say goodbye, Kayla is out the door --

~~EXT. JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL -- CONTINUOUS~~

~~A sprawling public school. Underfunded and at capacity. The
school year has started. Everyone has a routine, a clique.~~

~~Kayla walks tall, but her confidence erodes with each step.
Greeted by blank stares, she's on her own.~~

I/E. JEEP, JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL -- DAY

Margaret idles at the curb as Carlos stuffs graded exams into
his messenger bag.

MARGARET

Halls of doom? Okay, Captain Cool.

CARLOS

I'm down with the youth.

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MARGARET

But you'll keep an eye on her.

CARLOS

She's had enough supervision,
enough talk about what cocktail
she's on. That shit buries you.

MARGARET

You're projecting.

CARLOS

She's not your patient.

MARGARET

You're right. We should put a
tracker in her phone.

Carlos knows she's only half-kidding.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Can you get a ride to your meeting?

CARLOS

I'll skip it, make us all dinner.

MARGARET

You sure?

CARLOS

I can get free donuts another
night. Steaks sound good?

As he moves to get out, Margaret grabs him, kisses him deep.

MARGARET

(excited)

Family dinners. It's a strange, new
world.

EXT. MEDICAL PLAZA -- MORNING

A two-story medical plaza. The offices of chiropractors,
dentists, dermatologists that serve the Medicaid community.

Margaret's Jeep parks in the near empty lot. Close behind, a
PICKUP TRUCK follows her in. Margaret doesn't notice it as
she exits her car.

We stay on the Pickup.

In the driver's seat, GEORGE WYATT (30s). Tall. Sinewy. A
survivor that's always laughing at his own private joke.

EXT. OLD EAST DURHAM NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

A neighborhood in the midst of gentrification. Abandoned historic houses that hipsters buy cheap. But there are still some patches of gang-run blocks.

On the corner lot, a turn-of-the-century brick house that still needs some renovating, the Hayes' home --

INT. KITCHEN, HAYES HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Carlos mans a few pots on the stove as he listens to NPR.

Kayla slumps in, it's been a long day. Carlos motions to an onion on a cutting board.

Start → CARLOS
(re: onion)
Get cracking.

KAYLA
Thought I wasn't allowed to play
with knives.

CARLOS
Haha, nice try. Cut them nice and
thin.

Kayla starts on the onions, her eyes tearing. Carlos notices her scabbed knuckles.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
What happened there?

KAYLA
Beat up my locker.

CARLOS
Letting off steam?

Kayla shrugs, 'yeah'. He doesn't buy it.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Someone giving you a hard time?

KAYLA
... It doesn't matter.

Not making a big deal about it, he digs out some hydrogen peroxide and band-aids.

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CARLOS
(re: her cuts)
Never was a fighter. More of a
downers man.

KAYLA
Downers?

CARLOS
Oxys when I could afford them.
Worse when I couldn't.

Kayla perks up, not expecting that.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Yeah, a few years back, before I
met your mom... You get through it.
Doesn't feel like you will, but you
do.

Kayla cleans up her cuts, winces from the peroxide.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
(fishing)
Didn't peg you for a fighter.

KAYLA
... You know that girl, Gaby
Reddings?

CARLOS
Never had her in class. Heard she
was quiet.

Kayla pauses, not sure if she can trust him --

KAYLA
I saw Gaby.

CARLOS
What do you mean you saw her?

KAYLA
She's dead. And I saw her.

CARLOS
... That must've freaked you out.

KAYLA
Happens a lot. Mom didn't tell you?

CARLOS
Nothing specific.

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KAYLA

Nevermind.

CARLOS

Look, I saw all kinds of crazy shit. The first time I went clean, my carpet was waving at me.

(off Kayla's confusion)

I had this shag rug, like bad ass '70s shag. But a couple days sober, and it turned into a million little baby arms and they were all waving at me.

KAYLA

What does that mean?

CARLOS

Nothing. Not then, not now.

Kayla nods, relaxes for the first time.

KAYLA

Don't tell mom, okay. She's just gonna flip out.

CARLOS

I'll let you tell her.

KAYLA

Last time I said something, she put me in Central for ten years.

Kayla drops the knife and leaves the onion half-cut.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

I got homework.

Carlos realizes he fucked that up.

INT. DINING ROOM, HAYES HOUSE -- NIGHT

STOP

Margaret, Carlos and Kayla stare at their steaks, not sure how to be normal.

KAYLA

I'm a vegetarian.

Margaret's horrified she didn't know that.

MARGARET

(offers her plate)
Here. Have my potatoes.

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