

FIELD OF ANGELS: THE WILDERNESS

Written by

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EXT. WHITAKER HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

A BELL RINGS. An old traditional, red, brick building with a lot of latitude.

INT. WHITAKER HIGH SCHOOL - SAME

WILLIAM JOHNSON (15, African American, handsome), wearing a black hoodie, uneasily walks through the halls while various STUDENTS his age stare at him; some with GLARING looks --

A BLONDE GIRL (14) whispers to her FRIEND as Will passes her.

BLONDE GIRL

I can't believe he still shows his freakish face --

Will looks back, overhearing. He moves forward, his hood shielding his diffident and mysterious eyes.

A RED-HEADED BOY (well-built, jock, 16) quickly moves through the hall, BUMPING into Will, pushing him to the ground.

RED-HEAD BOY

Murderer... they should lock you away.

He stands over Will, who stays stationery.

EXT. WHITAKER HIGH SCHOOL - SAME

The Red-Headed Boy holds down Will's arms from the back as three other WHITE GUYS take turns PUMMELING Will in the face and stomach. One lands a PUNCH right in Will's face, BRUISING his right eye -- SOUND OF THE BELL RINGING -- The Red-head throws Will on the ground.

INT. WHITAKER HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

PETER JOHNSON (52, Will's white father through adoption) sits across from PRINCIPAL VINCE PARKER (burly, Jewish, 52).

PETER

I don't see how you could let this happen. I mean no one can identify who did this? NO ONE?

PRINCIPAL PARKER

Mr. Johnson, I hear your concerns, but certain matters are out of my control and this is one of them.

PETER

That's my son out there.

Principal Parker coolly looks outside his Plexiglas window, regarding Will, who sits in the waiting area. His face is bruised and his right eye is half closed.

PRINCIPAL PARKER

(stricter tone)

Look... Will has four weeks left in the semester... either he can finish the term here or he can finish somewhere else...

PETER

He's innocent, you know --

PRINCIPAL PARKER

(slightly relenting;  
sighing)

It's just that the students are terrified of him.

PETER

It was an accident.

PRINCIPAL PARKER

Realistically, Will needs to find a new school. I'm sorry it has to come to this.

PETER

You're kidding me?

Peter gives the Principal a incredulous look.

PETER (CONT'D)

You got to be kidding me.

INT. WHITAKER HIGH SCHOOL - SAME - WAITING AREA

Will sits quietly outside the principal's Plexiglas office as a young BLONDE passes him, a bit skirmish at the sight of his bruises. Will slouches a little, hoping to stay more invisible.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING - THE GUARDIAN CENTER

A still terrain populated with tall spruce trees.

Will, dressed in his black hoodie, holds a JAGGED ROCK while watching a lone BIRD soar across the sky.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I saw the newscast about Will. I'm sorry you both had to go through that.

PETER (V.O.)

Thank you. My son's life has never been the same since the student's death.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

It was an accident, deserving of more grace and understanding that we allowed.

(a beat)

I'm glad you brought him here.

PETER (V.O.)

You're the only school that hasn't rejected his application... I just want what's best for him.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

I understand... technically, it is our job to special teenagers like Will --

Will walks over to a large opening, near a great lake. He's still holding his rock. He looks at the distance between the shore and a nearby bank, his eyes SQUINTING at the CLOUDINESS of what's ahead. Nonetheless, Will raises his rock midway and throws it towards the lake.

The rock SKIPS along the water at ACCELERATED SPEED -- soon SINKING BENEATH the SURFACE -- more RIPPLES spread in the water, suggesting that there is something else underneath.

INT. LOG CABIN - SAME

ADRIEN GALLAGHER, (African America female, 54) faces Will, shaking his hand. There is something reservedly militant about her personality. She notices the bruise under his right eye. The voice of the female from earlier:

ADRIEN

Will, my name is Adrien. I am the director here at Guiding Light. Your father has told me a lot about you. Welcome.

She gestures for Will to take a seat. He moves over to the chair and sits.

EXT. LOG CABIN - SAME

A nondescript cabin in the background.

Peter stands next to his 1971 Blue Ford Bronco, attempting to shove a loose headlight back in the socket. The Bronco is parked on a dirt trail, which leads up to the cabin.

The light falls back out of the socket. Peter places his hand on his side, befuddled by the hanging light.

INT. LOG CABIN - SAME

Adrien sits at a wooden table while Will sits in the corner. There's a lot of space between these two.

ADRIEN

I would love to hear a little more about you.

He takes a while.

WILL

I don't have much to say.

ADRIEN

I understand that you don't interact with others too often... You like to be alone... me too... at least for the most part.

Will swallows hard, not too much at ease yet.

ADRIEN (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm really going to cut all the meet-n-greet bull shit here... if you don't mind me doing so Will. I believe that Guiding Light is truly the place for you to find out who you really are. If that's an important thing for you, then I hope you would accept my invitation to join us. That's really all I got. So join us?

Will stares at Adrien, still unresponsive.

EXT. FOREST - SAME

Will and Peter stroll among the trees.

PETER

What do you think? I mean it's just an option... that's quite a distance from home.

(a beat)

Maybe we should keep looking for the right place. The woods here sort of gives me the heebie jeebies.

WILL

Do I have to go to school again, Dad?

PETER

I don't know. We'll see.

Will looks up at the sky.

WILL

It's going to rain. We should go.

Peter watches as Will makes his way towards the Bronco in the distance.

EXT. PETER'S CAR - SAME

Rain is POURING HARD, BATTING DOWN on the ground and TREES -- Peter and Will are drenched as they hurry towards the Bronco, soon tugging at their respective doors, opening them.

Before Peter enters, he exchanges a look with Adrien who stands in the door of the cabin -- Peter jumps in the car, SLAMMING the door SHUT.

INT. PETER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Will sits in front of the television, eating a PACKAGED CHICKEN DINNER while watching the news - A NEWSCASTER describing a suspect of an armed robbery who killed three civilians. In the background is the blurred vision of Adrien (the woman from earlier). Will slows down his eating as he makes out her face.

Peter walks over, holding his MICROWAVE dinner and sitting next to Will. Peter picks up the remote and switches the channel to a John Wayne Western.

PETER

What do you think of home-schooling again?

WILL  
 (innocently)  
 It's whatever you want me to do,  
 Dad?

Peter watches as Will bites into a piece of his chicken nugget.

PETER  
 Home-schooling might not be a bad  
 idea in these potentially violent  
 times. You never know what you  
 could run into out there. We just  
 need to find a good teacher for  
 you.

WILL  
 Couldn't you just teach me?

Peter exchanges a look with his historically battered son.

PETER  
 I would but I'm scared half to  
 death of all that algebra and Math  
 shit. Plus, I'm not that smart,  
 son.

The two exchange a smile.

ON SCREEN: John Wayne dodges some bullets during a shooting sequence.

INT. PETER'S HOUSE - NIGHT - BATHROOM

Will stands in the mirror with his shirt off. He looks at two long, broad SCARS that run down his shoulders.

Peter stands by the door.

PETER  
 Are they hurting?

Will shakes his head.

WILL  
 No.

PETER  
 That's right, they never hurt.  
 Strangely.

Peter begins to walk off.

PETER (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 They just look bigger than I  
 remember.

Will knows that there aren't any answers. He begins to put on his shirt.

EXT. BLUE BRONCO - MORNING

The Bronco MOVES along the highway.

INT. PETER'S BRONCO - SAME

Peter steers the wheel soon passing a road sign: Wisconsin welcomes you. Will looks out at the shifting forest.

PETER  
 Your grandmother will be happy to  
 see you.  
 (a beat)  
 It's been a while.  
 (a beat)  
 Just try to spend a little more  
 time with her this round. Okay?

Will looks out the car window.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Peter's childhood home. An isolated house bordering a corn field. A few other houses, situated along a country-like area, remain in the distance --

Peter and Will approach the house, walking up the creaking steps.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SAME - LIVING AREA

Peter's mother, SHIRLEY (80, stern), sits at a wooden table with her son. She wears a white night gown.

Will stands nearby.

SHIRLEY  
 Why don't you let the boy play  
 outside for a while? No harm in  
 that.

Peter doesn't like his mother's repugnant tone.



PETER  
Will can stay, Mother.

WILL  
It's okay, Dad.

Will moves towards the SCREEN DOOR.

SHIRLEY  
(surprised)  
He still calls you 'Dad'? Wow,  
that's a shame.

PETER  
(exasperated)  
For Christ's sake.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Will walks over to the tall corn stalks, gently touching the leaves with his palms as the WIND SHAKES and RATTLES them -- He notices an underdeveloped stalk -- Will looks at another plant with a beautiful golden TASSLE growing on the top.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - SAME - LIVING AREA

Peter walks over to the dining table holding a large, red, brewing tea cup. He places it in front of his mother -- Peter sits back in his chair.

SHIRLEY  
That boy gets stranger as the years  
go by.

PETER  
I don't understand your issue with  
Will, Mother. My son is a good boy.

SHIRLEY  
Back in my day, you bringing a boy  
like that in these parts would have  
been an horrendous thing to do.

PETER  
Because he's black?

SHIRLEY  
Yes, because he's a *Nigger* just  
like the rest of those black  
Niggers.

Peter shakes his head.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Why would you and Beverly adopt his *kind* out of all the other white babies you could have?

PETER

(slamming his fist on the table)

Mother, that's enough!

(a beat)

This isn't 1962 anymore.

SHIRLEY

The hell it isn't.

PETER

For Christ's sake, please stop.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Will stands in front of the door, his hand on the knob. He lets go of it, likely to have heard the conversation inside. The quiet wind shakes the RICKETY screen door.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

It's dinner time. The tables are set. Peter holds a bowl of green peas and scrapes a portion of it onto his mother's plate, then subsequently onto Will's.

It's a serving of bake chicken, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots. The three briefly sit in silence while eating --

PETER

Will might be starting a new school soon.

Shirley takes her glass of water and drinks.

SHIRLEY

What's wrong with the old one?

PETER

Nothing. He just needs a change of scenery.

Shirley looks at Will, who eats silently.

SHIRLEY

Well, how much is this new school costing you?

PETER  
Mother, please.

Sound of a CAT CLAWING at the door.

SHIRLEY  
(to Will)  
Go ahead, let Mr. Rodgers in.

Will walks over and opens the door, letting a black cat walk through the room --

The cat starts PURRING and SCRATCHING on Will's seat as Will sits down.

PETER  
(to Will)  
He likes you.

SHIRLEY  
Mr. Rodgers is a bit of a common  
whore.

PETER  
The *language*, Mother.  
(a beat)  
Son, why don't you show your  
Grandmother what you made for her?

Will puts down his fork and begins to take something out of his pocket: it's a wooden sculpture of an ORNATE FLOWER.

PETER (CONT'D)  
He made that last night in one go.

Peter points to a stand with a variety of antique figurines, including sculptured flowers.

PETER (CONT'D)  
He thought it would be a good  
addition to your collection of  
knickknacks.

WILL  
I hope you like it.

Will places the flower on the table next to Shirley who looks at it for a moment.

SHIRLEY  
It's a little too common for my  
taste, son.