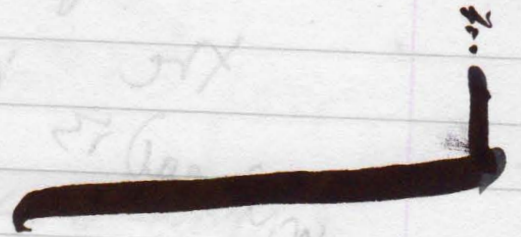


INSPIRED BY THE SCREENPLAY BY
CATHERINE HARDWICKE & ARTY NELSON



A NOVEL BY

KATE CRASH



FOR

MY BEAUTIFUL VILLAIN



1

*Another woman that's not my mom is screaming in the room next door
And we're under the covers, hiding from the world of wars
Nobody gets us, but that's what we have each other for
Nobody gets us in the lost land called going nowhere far*

Our lyrics on the paper. His hand writes a word, then mine. I look into his intense, grey eyes and feel like I'm falling into myself – our heads smothered in the darkness of the sheets, our lives forever tangled in the seams of each other. We're like this together almost every night.

"Shhhh you hear that?" I whisper, my head moving from his chest. Some lady's yells wobble through the wall – something about not calling – then a slam on the floor morphs into sad moans with a squeaking mattress hitting slow then fast. Jack looks hard at me and I feel the same old cherry pits and tree knots in my tiny stomach. Awkward.

He smirks: "She moans like a holy pregnant cow getting milked by a steamroller." His fine bird-boned hands move to the side of the bed.

I smile: "Our dad is so drunk."

Jack picks up the blue painted guitar and starts wailing to the sounds of father's abandoned hope fisting some slut to forget what living is for. UHHHHHHH. He wails on the high notes to harmonize with her groaning – strings pulling down and being let go. "Hahahahahahaha," we laugh in unison. The clock hits 2 a.m. Outside night falls into itself. *BAM BAM BAM*. He speeds his guitar to match the mattress beating against the wall so fast. *WAH WEEEEOOOOH WAHHHH WAH*.

"CUT THAT OUT! THAT'S NOT FUNNY STOP!" Dad's voice garbles from the other side of the wall.

"Hahhahahahaha." Jack's fingers dagger the fretboard. He ramps the amp.

"Is Jack in there with you Hayley?" Dad pounds his fist on the other side of my wall.

"No," I yell back.

The guitar drops from Jack as he flashes his mopey black hair from the bed and out my window, jumps over the hedge, and hops into the window next door.

A ray of light blasts as dad opens the door – shirtless belly and tattoos. Ugh. "WAS JACK IN HERE? SOUNDED LIKE HIM. JEEZE CLEAN UR FUCKING ROOM!" Dad yells. Dirty clothes are strewn like confetti chaos. A fork sticks out of the wall holding a dried black rose. Surrounding it are cut outs from magazines and stolen library books, favorite poems, photos, dreams, Last Exit to Brooklyn, 20 Love Poems and a Song of Despair, Tropic of Cancer, Alice in Wonderland. From my ceiling a sky of silver streamers hang like a jungle of sparkle.

I grab the guitar and start to strum. "Just me...Who was in your room?" I menace back. He gives me the black-eyed stare of despair as I pull my covers up. I want to defy everything about our life together. Dad. I hate his booze and I hate all the strangers that roll in and out of his room like a gas station restroom.

He slams my door. I roll over to the other wall. My wall with Jack. *TAP TAP TIP TAP*. Jack taps back. *TIP TIP TIP*: that means we are all clear. Our code. Everything is a secret code between us.

Time to sleep. Another night in the life of a lost brother and sister somewhere under the south Texas moon. No time to weep. A falling down ranch house sinks slowly beneath the world. I lay down and fall into a better world: the world of dreams.