

SPLINTERED

Written by

Sara Wagner

A black screen. A phone RINGS on a line, HEAVY BREATHING.

911 OPERATOR
911, what is your emergency?

MAN
Oh god Mira, please wake up. El,
stay back!

911 OPERATOR
Hello? Sir? I need you to talk to
me.

MAN
Oh fuck oh shit. It's my wife,
she's not breathing. She cut her
wrists.

911 OPERATOR
Okay sir, I need you to remain
calm. Officers are two minutes from
your location.

We hear the man begin to CRY.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

STAN, 53, quiet, reserved and rugged stands in a black suit at the sink. People dressed in black walk passed the kitchen doorway, talking. LEAH, 49, Stans sister, warm yet condescending walks into the kitchen. She wears a black dress and heels, her brunette hair perfectly in place. She puts her hand on Stans back.

LEAH
How you holdin' up?

Stan takes a deep breath, grabs a glass of whisky from the counter and shoots it back.

STAN
I'd be lyin' if I said well.

LEAH
And El?

STAN
Hell, Leah, she still doesn't
remember a god damn thing. Doctors
call it dissociative amnesia.

Leah is quiet for a moment.

LEAH

Why don't you let me talk to her? I know I don't practice anymore but I am a doctor, you know. I might be able to help her.

STAN

You think it's ethical to treat family members? Besides, it's not what Mira woulda wanted. She believed very firmly in complete patient-doctor confidentiality. You wouldn't be able to give her that.

Again, Leah takes a moment, careful about her speech.

LEAH

Maybe I'm not the best judge anyway, I thought Mira was doing better.

STAN

Well, schizophrenia's a hell of a disease. You know, she just switched doctors again, I shoulda known somethin' was up. Shouldn't have trusted those quack bastards.

EL, 17, introverted, smart but maintains the naivety that comes with youth, walks into the kitchen wearing a black dress with long sleeves. Her blond hair falls mid-back, and her eyes are a pale grey.

LEAH

Hey sweetie.

Leah hugs El, rubs her back.

EL

Hey aunt Leah.

Leah puts El's face in her hands, strokes her cheek with her thumb.

LEAH

I just want you to know, if you ever need anything at all, I'm your lady. Okay?

El half smiles, turns to Stan.

EL

Is it okay if I go upstairs? I
still have some packing to do.

STAN

Of course.

El leaves. Leah pulls Stan further from the doorway, lowers her voice.

LEAH

Are you sure taking her away from
her home is a good move right now?
Brad and I talked about it and we'd
be happy to help out with-

Stan cuts her off.

STAN

I don't need your husbands money,
Leah. What I need is to get my
daughter out of this town.

LEAH

Stan...

STAN

Look, her doctors agree. Until El
can come to terms with what
happened to Mira it's not healthy
for her to be here. Christ, she
still thinks someone was in the
house, do you know what that does
to a kid? It's hard enough that
she's gone, even harder to except
she did it to herself.

LEAH

What's she gonna do up there
though? She's a teenager, it's her
last year in school. She wants to
be out with her friends not
restoring old cabins on a freezing
cold lake.

STAN

I know my daughter, Leah. She loves
that lake as much as her mom did,
and if Mira was here it's where
she'd want us to go. We'd been
waitin' on that property sale for a
year. It'll be good to build
something up in her mom's memory,
anyway.

TWO MONTHS LATER

INT. EL'S BEDROOM-DAY

Early morning, silence fills the room. The only sound being that of a TICK TICK TICK of a wall clock. The room is small, a twin bed against one wall with a trunk at its foot. A bookshelf is against another wall, a dresser sits across from it.

El lies in bed, staring at the ceiling. Her eyes are glossy, mostly black, pupils wide, back arched, just enough to look unnatural. Her lips move quickly, but no sound comes from them.

INT. OLD BATHROOM- NIGHT

El's memory. She screams, holding MIRA, 48, life in a bathtub of blood. Stan comes in, pulls her back. Mira drops below the surface, blank eyes stare back.

INT. EL'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

There is a pounding on the door, equally as loud as the clock. The handle turns slowly, the door pops open. The room fills with CHIRPING from outside, El's back relaxes and her eyes are now their usual color. She blinks, shaking her head.

Stan stands in the doorway. A fat calico cat runs in between his legs. He wears a plaid button-up shirt with jeans and work boots. His hair is dark, peppered with grey and cut short.

STAN

She's been sittin' outside your
door cryin' atcha all mornin'.

El props herself up on her elbows, pats the bed next to her while clicking her tongue. The cat jumps up, begins to purr.

STAN

It's already 7:30 kiddo, we gotta
get goin'.

El swings her legs over the side of the bed, sitting up. She wears a nightgown, and rubbing her eyes, yawns.

STAN

Another late night?

EL

I don't know, I guess. I just feel
like I never sleep since we moved
out here.

Stan gives her a sympathetic look, then takes a step back.

STAN

You're her twin, you know.

El smiles, gets out of bed.

EL

I know dad. You tell me every
single day.

Stan smiles.

STAN

Breakfast is on the table. Come on,
we got work to do.

Stan closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

The kitchen is small and dimly lit.

Stan sits at the table, two plates adjacent to each other. El enters, grabs a glass of water, settles down across from him. Her hair is braided on either side of her face, capped with a beanie. Her long sleeved shirt is covered by a vest, and her jeans are tucked into a pair of boots.

She begins to pick at her breakfast. Outside the kitchen windows, the world is still dark.

Stan lifts a newspaper, Duluth Daily, and begins to look it over. The cat runs in, rubs itself against El's legs. She reaches down and feeds her a small piece of bacon.

STAN

You're gonna make that cat so fat
she won't be able to manage the
stairs anymore.

El smiles, whispers to the cat.

EL

Don't you listen to him, Daisy Mae.
You're the prettiest kitty in the
whole world. Besides, if it comes
to that, I'll just carry you.

EXT. CABIN- DAY

Stan and El work siding a cabin, the sun just beginning to rise. The shore of Lake Superior is fifty feet from the cabins porch, and as the lake curves we see more cabins lining its coast.

EL

How long 'till we can start renting them out?

Stan pauses, looks out over the lake.

STAN

Well, we got six cabins to renovate. Two people. Not the best budget. Probably not until next summer at the earliest.

El doesn't reply, joins him in looking over the water.

STAN

She always wanted a place like this, you know. Fresh Superior air, quiet little life. We were so close to gettin' out.

EL

I know.

STAN

You like it here?

El picks up a piece of siding, starts fixing it to the cabin.

EL

Yeah. It's quiet. I like that.

She musters a smile, it hides the pain poorly.

INT. BATHROOM- DAY

El stands at the sink, studying her face in the mirror. Her face shifts into her mothers, then back to herself. She rubs her eyes, then splashes water on her face. The noise drains from the room, a high pitched RINGING replaces ambient sound.

El's POV- El looks down in the sink, the water running from the faucet turns a deep red, it drips off of her face the same color. Her vision blurs.

The ringing stops, the water is back to it's usual clear color.

El turns off the faucet and sits on the end of the bathtub, breathing heavily. She is visibly shaken. She studies her hands, they are simply wet with water.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

El sets dinner down on the table where Stan sits, drinking a beer. El sits across from him, they begin to eat in silence.

EL

Can I ask you something?

STAN

Course you can. What's up?

El hesitates.

EL

How old was mom when she got sick?

Stan pauses, fork and knife half way through cutting a piece of chicken. He waits a long minute before responding.

STAN

It started when you were about five years old. So she would've been maybe thirty six. Why'd you ask?

He resumes eating.

EL

I don't know, just curious I guess.

El fiddles with her hands, ignoring her food.

EL

Sometimes when I look in the mirror, I don't see myself. I see mom.

Stan puts a bite of food into his mouth, chews it slowly.

STAN

You- we - experienced a very traumatic experience. The last six months, they've been hell. But you're not sick like she was El, and you're not going to end up like her.

El's disposition changes, she becomes more tense, almost angry.

EL

How do you know? It's hereditary,
symptoms don't even start until
adulthood. I'm seventeen-

Stan interrupts her, voice BOOMING.

STAN

You think I don't know that? You
think I don't worry every fucking
day that I won't lose my only child
to the same thing that took my
wife?

He draws back into himself, knowing he's overstepped. El is no longer angry, but on the brink of tears.

EL

I've told you one hundred times,
she didn't kill herself.

Stan, defeated, sighs.

STAN

We aren't having this conversation
again, El. There was no one else in
the house that day, okay?

EL

You don't know, you didn't find
her.

STAN

I came home right after you, the
police did the investigation.

He pauses, cautious with his next statement.

STAN

You don't even remember, El. How
can you keep on insisting someone
else was there?

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

El walks in the front door, which can be seen from the kitchen. She comes into the kitchen, plops her backpack on the table next to a note. It reads: Gone for supplies, back around 7- Dad.

INT. EL'S BEDROOM-DAY

El sits on her bed, doing homework. Her door is slightly ajar, Daisy sits on the bed next to her, sleeping. Footsteps CREEK in the hallway, El pauses. The footsteps stop.

EL

Dad?

There is no reply. El waits for a moment longer, shakes it off and goes back to her homework.

Again, footsteps are heard in the hallway. El shuts her book. Breathing slows, cautious. Daisy perks her ears up, roused from her slumber.

El looks to Daisy, then back to her door.

EL

Do you wanna go look or should I?

Footsteps run passed El's doorway, but nobody can be seen. A door is heard opening, Daisy gets up and runs out of El's room.

EL

No! Damn it.

El gets up, tip-toes to the doorway. Peers out.

INT. HALLWAY- DAY

The hallway is dark, not much sunlight finds it's way here. At the end of the hall is an open door, filled with boxes. El watches as Daisy trots in, the door abruptly closing behind her. She runs to the end of the hallway, throws the door open.

INT. STORAGE ROOM- DAY

The room is filled with light, unlike the rest of the rooms in the house. Windows fill nearly all of the wall space. Boxes are everywhere, piled around extra furniture.

Daisy sits in a corner on top of a box. The tension in the room is thick and silent. There is no noise, except a RINGING.

In the middle of the floor is a red gift box, wrapped and complete with a ribbon.

El goes to it, opening it gently. She lifts the cover, finding blood covered razor blades. Bloody water begins to bubble up in the box, overflowing and spilling onto Els hands. She SCREAMS, but the sound is siphoned out of the room, no noise escapes her lips.

A WHISPER cuts through the silence.

MIRA
El.

INT. EL'S BEDROOM-DAY

The whisper startles El awake, finding herself back in her bedroom, homework sprawled out in front of her. Daisy sleeps on the bed next to her, undisturbed.