

painted the cabinets seventeen years ago in an attempt to bring some light into the house. Over the big fireplace in the adjoining handkerchief-sized family room was a row of pictures. First a wedding picture of Richard and my mom in Las Vegas, then one of the five of us in the hospital after I was born, taken by a helpful nurse- Mariam, followed by the procession of my school pictures up to the last years. Those were absurd to look at — I would have to see what I could do to get Richard to put them somewhere else, at least while I was living here.

It was impossible, being in this house, not to realize that Richard had never gotten over my mom. It made me really uncomfortable, they didn't split up because they had to, I guess it was to cover their tracks of what they did to me, in to this new person with a brand new brain, although it's one of those things to unleash. I didn't want to be too early to school, but I couldn't stay in the house anymore. I dropped my jacket which had the feel of a hazardous suit and headed out into the rain. It was just drizzling still, not enough to fold me through immediately as I reached for the house key that was always hidden under the leaves by the door, and locked up. The splashing of my new waterproof boots was unnerving. I missed the normal crunch of gravel as I moved. I couldn't pause or take a look at my truck again as I wanted; I was in a hurry to get out of the misty wet that swirled around my neck and clung to my hair under my shirt. Inside the truck, it was dry and nice. Either Hannah or Richard had obviously cleaned it up, but the upholstered seats still smelled faintly of tobacco, gasoline, and peppermint. The engine started at once, to my relief, but loudly, shouting to life and then idling at top volume. Well, a truck this old was bound to have

its flaw. The antique radio worked, a plus I never expected. Locating the school wasn't difficult, though I'd never been there before.

The school I guess was, like most other buildings, just off the road. It was not too obvious that it was a school; only the sign, which announced it, to be the Headies High School, made me wait. It looked like a wave of matching houses, built with red-colored bricks. There were so many trees and shrubs I couldn't see its size at first.

Where was the feel of the school? I wondered. Where were the chain-link fences, the metal detectors? I parked in front of the first building, which had a large sign over the door reading front office. No one else was parked there, so I was sure it was off limits, but I concluded I would get directions inside instead of driving around in the rain like a fool. I stepped unwillingly out of the toasty truck cab at last and walked down a little stone path lined with dark hedges. I took a deep breath before heading for the door.

Inside, it was brightly lit, and cooler than I'd hoped.

The office was very small; a little waiting area with padded folding chairs, yellow-flecked commercial carpet, notices and collection of awards cluttering the walls, a big clock ticking quietly. Plants grew everywhere in small plastic pots, as if there wasn't enough greenery outside. The room was cut in half by a short counter, rapped with wire baskets full of papers and brightly colored flyers taped to its front. There were four desks behind the counter, one of which was manned