Abandonment Issues with Children and the Relationship in *Eli the Good*

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Throughout Silas House’s novel, *Eli the Good*, readers observe many different forms of abandonment from parents, but from the novel’s character, Edie, the reader is able to see how abandoning a young, adolescent girl can affect a child for the rest of their life. During the adolescent years higher forms of authority play major roles in a child’s life. Edie describes her mother as psychotic, her father is a drunk, and her only form of security is through Eli’s mother, Loretta. Edie is a girl struggling with the divorce of her parents and is beginning to notice how dependent she really is on them. Edie is trying to figure out who she is in life and without the support of a stable family during her process of adolescence; it becomes an ongoing struggle for her. Silas House tells the reader about many ongoing issues within the book, and he always seems to refer back to how the children talked about were struggling with abandonment from their parents.

Edie grew up in a household with her mother, father, and a disturbing noise that everyone could hear but the only person that could see what was happening inside the house was she. By putting on a front of an invincible, grown up young girl Edie thought she was covering up the pain that was building up inside of her. Edie tries to run from her issues by hiding outside in trees or playing with her friends to make herself believe that nothing was happening but deep down everyone knew about her parents fighting and soon to be announced divorce. “They fought all the time. Loud. Sometimes on the front porch or in the yard. And even when they kept their fury contained to the house, we could all hear them screaming at each other” (House 51). A pre-teen divorce study states that, “Parental reports indicated that 12-year-olds with divorced parents showed more internalizing and externalizing problems than children with married parents.” (Robbers 1). Edie, being a child of divorced parents, is on the verge of forming many of these problems, and they can affect her for the rest of her life if they are not dealt with properly. A
major concern for adolescent children is where and with whom they end up residing with; this can cause many issues to emerge with a child facing a divorce in their adolescent years.

Edie is a young girl, but she knows that her mother is crazy and abandoned her to fend for herself. Edie wants to believe that her mother’s actions are for her own being, to relieve her from the burden of fighting, but deep down she knows her mother is only leaving for herself. Edie is a smart girl and she is smart enough to understand that, “Real mothers don’t just up and leave you. She don’t love anybody but herself” (House 156). When parents abandon a child it is often because they are consumed with their own problems and focusing on themselves during the troubling time. An adolescent may start to feel neglected and there time to grow up is shortened by the divorce (Kirby n.pag.). Edie is in the process of becoming more independent and more involved with plans for her future, but even though she is growing up she still needs guidance from her parents. As a pre-teen, Edie is looking for reassurance and positive attitudes to help her cope with the process of her parents’ divorce but young children need more than just a mother, they need a father.

During a divorce a child can feel that they have lost of both parents and in Eli the Good, the reader can tell this has happened to Edie. Edie has already lost her mother but the way her father is dealing with his lost; she feels she is beginning to lose him as well. “‘He must not care that I’m having a hard time with this, too, then,” She said. “He can get drunk, but what am I supposed to do?’” (House 224). While Edie deals with an enormous amount of negative energy and after losing a mother, the need for a positive father figure in her life becomes a necessity she longs for. “Fathers tend to give their daughters a kind of admiration and attention that mothers can’t offer: a man’s admiration and attention. Girls who do not get attention from, or are not admired by, a positive father figure during childhood will tend to be more seductive and assertive
in inappropriate ways.” (Brogaard n.pag.). Edie is at a point where she has no one to turn too; she has reached a breaking point. Even though her father is not physically abusing her, the constant drinking and fighting between them cause Edie to experience mental abuse. During a divorce when a young girl loses their mother, the father needs to step up and become a figure that the child can look up to. Losing parents and facing adolescence is not easy, and Edie is a perfect example of how many girls act during this process.

The story continues to talk about how Edie acts while she is dealing with the divorce but as the fighting increases the reader soon notices how Eli’s mom, Loretta, becomes a person Edie uses for comfort. Loretta was a woman that everyone loved, because she had something about her that allowed her to be set apart from other women. She had a shine to her personality that drew many people into her. “You don’t know how lucky you are, to have a mother like yours. Everybody loves her. But my mother, she stays holed up in the house, thinking up things to be miserable about” (House 53). Loretta was a listener and also acknowledged how people felt; these are reasons why Edie was drawn to her for advice. Adolescents going through divorce tend to view it as a loss of a parent that they will never regain. Many children began to look for figures that can help them grieve, adjust to the new conditions, and support their feelings (Block n.pag.). Adolescence can be a hard obstacle for young girls to overcome, many girls often feel betrayed by their parents and build a wall blocking out communication between their family members. Most girls Edie’s age search for a woman figure that reminds them of their mother and they try to fix the hurting within.

*Eli the Good* was an insightful novel that depicted many problems, but magnified on the issues of childhood abandonment and how children cope with issues like these. Most of the problems in the story revolved around abandonment and the problems were exemplified through
the characters, especially Edie. She finally is able to find comfort and security through the other characters, like Loretta. House uses the characters and sequences the events of the story to contrast the pain of childhood abandonment with a message of hope that minimizes the sadness of Edie’s life. Silas House illuminates Edie’s life and misfortunes too not only make readers aware of the horrors of abandonment, but also to show the positive side of any circumstances.
Works Cited


