

# TYPICAL GIRLS



two stories  
by Jennifer Whiteford

## Typical Girls

But really, what started it all was that we heard *London Calling* on the radio directly after *Dude Looks Like a Lady*.

Everything had been normal up until that point. My best friend, Krista Bailhurst (or “Nail-first” if you were one of the dumb guys in my grade) was driving her mom’s Volkswagon Rabbit and I was sitting, as usual, in the passenger seat with my arm out the open window. I had been studying my hair in the side-view mirror when Areosmith came on and Krista turned it up. I had been evaluating my hairstyle, thinking that it may have looked great when I left the house after dinner that night, but two hours of having it blown around in the wind while we drove had flattened it out and made it look lame, lame, lame. Krista’s hair never looked like that. Hers was curly to start with, and she always used a ton of hairspray in it. It almost looked like Barbie hair. Krista was not afraid of hairspray, or much else for that matter.

When *Dude Looks Like a Lady* came on and Krista turned it up I looked away from the side-view mirror and smiled at her. She smiled back and pumped her left fist in the air out her own open window. We opened our mouths and starting singing.

Krista never needed to look at herself in the car mirror unless it was to fix her lipstick after giving some guy a blowjob or to fix her mascara when it streaked down her face while she barfed after having too many rye and cokes at a party. She never stared at the mirror, worrying, the way I did. She didn’t have to. Krista was hot, sure, but she was also smart. Smart

enough to know that how you looked didn't really matter at all. Krista had lots of other things to think about.

We sang the whole song, word for word, and we even did the same hip-thrusting dance in our seats during the "whatta funky lay-dee" part. This was the way that I liked to spend my nights. I didn't even care if we met up with some boys. It was always enough if it was just Krista and me and the radio.

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My scar goes from my left ear to the corner of my mouth.

When I was fifteen and I'd only had the scar for about two years, I used to refer to it as *my big huge scar*. As in, "Dena and I are identical twins and the only way you can tell us apart is *my big, huge scar!*"

My older stepbrother, Keith, is the reason why I have the scar. And the scar is the reason why he is away at boarding school. Keith gave me the scar on purpose because I was being *mouthy*. I can't even remember exactly what I said, but the main point of it was that Keith had a small dick.

I'd never even seen Keith's dick before, so it wasn't like I said that because I knew it was true or anything. It was just one of those things that you say, the kind of thing I might say to some jerk who pushed my books out of my hands in the hallway at school, or to one of the guys at the arcade that like to yell about Krista being easy.

I think now that Keith must actually have a small dick, because otherwise I don't think he would have

been upset enough to come after me with a knife. He is two years older than me and totally enormous, big like a football player. He grabbed my arm and brought the knife up to my face and growled at me to "take it back!" Of course I wouldn't. Would you have thought that your own stepbrother would really cut you in the face? I sure didn't.

After he did it, I was kind of in shock. The cut was really deep and blood just went everywhere. It didn't hurt as much as I would have thought, but it stung like a bitch and I got pretty freaked out about all the blood. I didn't cry, though. I just looked at Keith with my meanest face ever. Dena screamed and when Mom came upstairs and saw the blood she went totally ballistic. She put a big green towel on my face and made Dena hold it there while she ran to get my stepfather, Don.

"Don, get up here and take a look at what your lunatic son did to my girl!"

Keith was still holding the knife, which had a bit of blood on it. There was blood on his U2 Unforgettable Fire concert t-shirt too. I was glad about that, because I always fucking hated U2.

Don came upstairs and even though he is only about half the size of Keith, he looked mad enough that Keith put the knife down on my dresser and looked at the ground. He reminded me of a puppy who'd pissed on the rug. Just waiting to get clobbered by a rolled up newspaper.

I went to the hospital and Keith got sent to stay with his mother until he could be shipped away to a school for unmanageable teenage boys. I didn't really miss

him. The last thing I wanted to do was run around worrying that someone I lived with was going to slash me in the face.

As if I didn't have enough to worry about already.

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When *Dude Looks Like a Lady* was all done, the radio DJ started playing The Clash without even saying a word. Krista leaned forward like she was going to turn down the volume, but then she didn't. She just rested her hand on the cigarette lighter and turned to look at me. "What band is this again?"

*London Calling* rattled out of the tinny, dashboard speakers as our car jerked to stop at an intersection.

"It's The Clash." I told her. Krista could never remember who sang what or what album a certain song was on, but I was pretty good at knowing that stuff.

*The Clash*. Krista mouthed the words. It looked like she was tasting them, like they were made of hard candy, rolling around behind her teeth.

The light turned green and Krista jammed her foot down on the gas pedal. We lurched forward. The sun had disappeared beyond the horizon and the streets were getting suffocated by a kind of orange darkness.

Krista didn't say anything until the song was over. When an announcer came on talking about the price of dishwashers at Mike Murley's Used Appliance Emporium, Krista turned to me. "Poor Boy's?" she asked. I nodded.



Poor Boy's Arcade was where all the headbangers hung out. Most of the headbangers were boys and what they liked to do best while they were inside the arcade was play the racing games where you sit down in front of the screen and its like you're really driving a car around a track or something. What they liked to do best outside of the arcade was smoke joints and take pulls off of the flasks that some of them kept in their jean jacket pockets. Also, they liked to go to their cars and get blowjobs off of girls like me and Krista.

When we got to Poor Boy's I could see a bunch of boys all gathered around the entrance. There was a cloud of smoke around them. I looked into the side-view mirror again before we got out of the car. I tried to fix my hair so that it would cover as much of my scar as possible. Even with make-up you could still see its outline, snaking down my face like a road with a sharp right hand turn. The boys by the arcade door turned to watch us as we got out of the car.

"Hey! Krista!" one of them called out, "You wanna take a little walk with me?"

I looked over at Krista, praying she would say no. I didn't want her to leave me alone with all these guys, at least not yet. I didn't want to have to go inside and pretend to be interested in getting the high score on Ms. Pac Man just so they'd leave me alone.

"No thanks, Latimer." Krista snapped her gum and narrowed her eyes into little slits, "I'll pass." She flipped her perfect hair over one shoulder and pulled me past the guys into the darkness of the arcade. It

smelled, as usual, like french fries and vomit. I was relieved to be inside.

"I thought you liked him," I said, as Krista lit a cigarette and then shook the match to extinguish it. She shook her head.

"Rory Latimer? No way." Rory was kind of the king of the metalheads. He was less goofy than a lot of them, kind of sexy in a scary way, with a big mane of hair, lots of acne, and very tight black jeans. Whenever my twin sister Dena saw him she said that those jeans were probably lowering his sperm count. Dena can be a bit of a bitch sometimes. And she totally hates heavy metal.

Krista took a long drag off her cigarette and then looked around, like she was checking to see if anybody could hear us.

"I think we need to stop being metalheads," she said. I squinted through the cloud of smoke she'd exhaled.

Krista and I had been metalheads since grade nine. We teased our hair up big, we wore tight jeans and short skirts. We hung out with metal boys and went to see Motley Crue at the Palladium in the summer time. If we weren't going to be metalheads, what were we going to be?

"I just think," Krista said, with another deep puff on her cigarette, "That if we were punks we'd have to put up with a lot less sexist bullshit."

I gave her a look, like, *what are you talking about*, and scowled at Rory who'd stuck his head in the door and was staring at Krista's boobs. Rory stuck his

tongue out at me and wagged it around. Then he disappeared behind the closing door.

The truth was, even though people at school thought she was dumb and slutty, Krista was always coming up with smart ideas. Like when the United States started bombing in Iraq she totally knew all the reasons why that was wrong. I knew it was wrong too, but Krista, she knew all the reasons exactly, and she could name the people who were in charge and tell you all about the history of the whole thing. Not that anyone ever asked her. I'm pretty sure I was the only one who knew how smart she was. But that didn't help me understand why she was suddenly wanting us not to be metalheads anymore.

"Punk girls don't run around giving blowjobs to guys. Punk girls are cooler. It really is the more feminist option. And we'd still get to listen to good music." Krista could talk like that, like she was writing some kind of fucking term paper, and all the while she'd be smoking like a fiend and scowling at the other people in the arcade who might dare to look over at us. I totally didn't know what to say.

"Let's get out of here," she said, grinding her cigarette butt into the dirty floor with the toe of her sneaker.

"Now?" I asked, looking around. "But we haven't even talked to any boys yet."

Krista turned her slit eyes around on me. "Haven't you been listening to me?" she asked. "This place is all wrong for us."

As much as I liked the thought of never having to give a blow job to another low-sperm-count, sweaty-



balled metalhead again, Krista's plan of action seemed a little extreme.

Rory Latimer thought so too.

"Hey, Nail First! Where're you goin'?"

Krista didn't even turn around. She just stalked past him and started rummaging around in her purse for her car keys. I walked around the car and stood with my hand on the passenger side door handle. I watched Rory run to his Corvette and hop into the driver's side. He gunned the engine and pulled it up just behind Krista's mom's Rabbit.

"Where are you goin'?" He asked again, his head sticking out the window.

"None of your Goddamn business," Krista told him. She was still pawing around inside her purse, looking for her keys. That was the only reason I knew she was kind of nervous.

"Why don't you come back inside and you and I can have a good time together?" Rory asked, grinning out the window.

"I'd rather eat shit."

Krista turned away from our car just as Rory hit the gas and pulled his car up beside us. I watched her turn around with a look of pure hatred on her face. Then I watched Rory drive over her foot.

"What the FUCK!" Krista screamed. All of a sudden she was standing on one leg, holding her busted left foot in her right hand. "MOTHER! FUCKER!"

Rory peeled out of the parking lot so fast, but I don't think he knew what he'd just done. I somehow managed to get Krista, who was still screaming and swearing, into the back seat of the car. She stretched out her leg and moaned a bit, staring at her mangled foot in its puffy, white Reebok sneaker.

"Aw fuck, look at my foot!" she said, and then, "I am never going to suck that guy's dick again,"

I laughed. And then I drove her to the hospital.

\*

Krista's broken foot gave her the week away from school that she needed to begin the Great Banger to Punk Image Transformation. I went to see her every day after school. At first I brought her homework, but after two days I realized that she wasn't going to do it anyway so I just stopped. Krista was doing a whole different kind of homework. She was mostly listening to records that her older brother, Martin, left behind when he'd gone away to college.

"I think my favourite is this one," she said, holding up the sleeve for London Calling. "But this is good too, and so is this, and this..." She tossed the record covers at me like they were Frisbees. The Sex Pistols, The Ramones, The New York Dolls, Gang of Four.

"You know James, with the sideburns?" I asked her. She thought for a minute and nodded. "He likes those bands."

James was an old, old friend of mine from our neighbourhood. We played truth or dare together

when we were in grade seven. Now we hardly talked, except sometimes when my parents invited his parents over and we were forced to socialize. I knew about the bands he liked because I paid attention to the t-shirts he wore to school.

Krista thought about that for a minute.

"The thing about these songs," she said, "Is that none of them are really about pussy, you know?" I shrugged and laughed a bit. "No, really!" She took the cap off a Sharpie and started drawing a heart on her cast. "These songs are about war and politics and, you know, *social issues*." I watched her pen a large dagger sticking into the heart. "It's way better than metal. Like, I listen to these songs and I think, *I could like this song forever*. It's not like Def Leppard where I'm lucky if I like a song for more than two months."

I took the Sharpie out of her hands and started drawing the outline of an electric guitar. Krista sat back and admired my work.

"You should call that guy James. We can talk to him about music."

"Maybe," I shrugged again. I knew that Krista would force me to call him before the end of the afternoon. I wondered what I would say.

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The next week Krista was back at school. The changes in her weren't that huge, but I noticed, and so did other people in our grade. First, her hair was flatter, she was looking a little bit like Joan Jett. Her thick eyeliner was the same, but her clothes were

different. No more high heels and jeans. Now she had big lace up boots (she only wore one since her other foot was still in the cast), ripped up fishnet stockings, and a kilt that was so short, if she dropped something she had to ask me to bend over and get it for her.

People were a little bit confused, but Krista still looked hot, so no one really got uptight about her new look. Plus, with those new boots, she looked even more like she could kick anyone ass who messed with her. And no one was surprised that she stopped hanging out with Rory Latimer and his arcade posse, because everyone in the whole school knew that he'd run over her foot.

It was just like Krista to have breaking her foot make everything else in her life run so smoothly.

At lunch time we went out back and ate with James and some of his friends who were the punkiest people we could find at our school. They were all boys and kind of geeky. They looked at Krista like she'd broken her foot while falling from heaven. Most of them didn't seem to know what to say to her. Luckily, Krista never had problems talking. While she entertained the nerdy punk boys, James and I sat beside each other eating sandwiches and talking about his record collection.

Listening to a boy talk about records like that would have been boring as hell if the boy was anyone other than James. But James did this thing where he would tell me about music that he actually thought I would like and then he'd tell me where I could go and get that particular record. He wasn't just talking, he was actually making sure that he was talking about something I'd be interested in. I'd never had a

conversation like that with a high school boy before, and I started to have a crush on James almost right away. I even liked his sideburns and I didn't care that I'd known him forever. He was cute and nice and he had the best records of anyone I'd ever met. And Krista wasn't interested in him, which meant that I actually had a chance.

I thought that James kind of liked me too, because when we all sat outside he would always come and sit down right next to me. Krista thought he liked me too, and she'd tease me about it while we drove around at night.

"Has James asked you out yet?"

"No."

"Has he kissed you yet?"

"NO!!"

"Are you dreaming about the two of you having little punkrock babies together?"

"Shut the fuck up, Krista".

The truth was, I had been dreaming about James, but not about babies. I had been using up the boring time during my classes dreaming about his record collection and about how maybe I could have sex with him in his room while his parents were out and then afterwards I could lie there with my head on his chest and he could play me a whole bunch of his favourite albums and we'd stay in his bed, naked, talking about music. That was what I'd been



dreaming about, but there was no way I would ever tell Krista, because she'd laugh her fucking ass off.

The weird thing was, James was one of the only people at school who had seen me before I got my scar. For some reason that made me feel more confident around him, like even if he didn't think I was pretty now at least he had some memories of how I had been pretty, before I got the big scar. I didn't tell that to Krista, either.

What I did tell her was that James came to my house one night when I was getting ready for bed. He asked if we could hang out on my porch for a while. I had answered the door in my Winnie the Pooh pajamas which made me feel like a huge loser, but since he'd already seen me, I couldn't run inside and put on normal clothes. So I told him I would get us glasses of water and I ran to the kitchen and checked my hair in the microwave. When I came outside I saw he was holding a bag from Soundman Records. He handed it to me.

"I...uh...got you this."

It was a Slits album. One he'd told me about that sounded so great. I hadn't had a chance to buy it for myself yet. I didn't know what to say. I felt like he'd just given me an engagement ring. Eventually I said thanks, but I was still shocked so it came out kind of breathy and dorky sounding. But James kissed me anyway and I put my hands on the sides of his face and touched his sideburns like I'd been wanting to do for weeks. We kissed until I heard Dena coming down the stairs. Her voice floated through the open window, calling my name.

# Desperado

*Summer 1975*

It is so obvious to me that those guys who kidnapped Patty Hearst are going to come and get me next.

Mom said that Dad is rich now, because of his new girlfriend, and he won't give any money to us, which is why we are not *living* like we are rich.

But Patty Hearst wasn't living like that either. She was living in an apartment with her boyfriend in California. Rich people get married and live in houses in Chicago. Or maybe they live in Beverly Hills or something. Mom says that San Francisco is full of dirty hippies. Dirty hippies don't sound like they'd be very rich.

So just because I'm not living like I'm a rich person, I'm still the daughter of someone who is rich and that means that I am probably going to be kidnapped. Then my dad will have to bring food for all the poor people just like Patty Hearst's dad did.

I wonder. Will I be like Patty Hearst? Everyone says her name is Tania now. She joined up with the kidnappers and now she has a different name. Is she still rich? Or do you stop being rich if you join up with the people who are against the rich? I have to ask mom.

\*

Because of the fact that I am going to be kidnapped, I am always very careful about opening the door when the doorbell rings. And I never wear my bathrobe unless I'm just quickly walking from the bathroom to my bedroom after my shower. I don't want to be kidnapped while I'm wearing my bathrobe because then when they put me in the closet I will have no underpants on and I think that would be very uncomfortable.

When James, who is the same age as me and not rich and lives next door, rang the doorbell, I could feel my heart beating all fast and I went and got a chair to stand on so I could look through the peephole to see who it was.

James was there, looking up at the peephole like he knew I was there looking down at him. He was wearing two different oven mitts and holding a casserole dish.

"Hurry up!" he said, sounding whiney. He kept on looking at the peephole. "My hands are burning off!"

I knew that James wasn't a kidnapper and that he probably wasn't the kind of boy to join forces with the kidnappers and ring the doorbell just to get me to open the door while the kidnappers hid behind mom's dying hedge waiting to jump out and get me. So I opened the door.

"Holy crap!" said James, "Took you long enough!"

I shut the door really fast behind him and locked it. Just in case.

He tried to hand me the casserole dish but I told him, "Duh! If it's burning your hands with those oven mitts on don't try and get me to take it with my bare hands! Dummy."

He rolled his eyes and walked past me into the kitchen. He dropped the casserole down on the top of the stove and it made a kind of scraping, clunking sound.

"Where's your mom?" he asked.

"She's out."

"She lets you stay by yourself?"

"Yeah, I'm very careful. I don't usually open the door for anyone and if I answer the phone I say she's in the shower."

James laughed like that wasn't even important.

"Where's Dena?" he asked.

"Why? Are you in love with her or something?"

Dena is my twin sister.

"Uh, NO!" James' ears turned red a little bit. He seemed to realize right then that he had the oven mitts on still. One oven mitt had a daisy on it and the thumb part was all burnt. The other one looked like it was the puppet head of a cow. James took them both off and held them behind his back.

"Dena's out with my mom." I told him. "I'm here all by myself, like I said."

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The box where I keep all the articles about Patty Hearst is a wooden box that used to be my dad's. I guess he doesn't need it anymore, now that he's rich. His new girlfriend can buy him some new boxes to put his stuff in.

This box is wooden and painted red. The inside is painted blue and smells a little bit like paint but mostly like cigarettes. I used to keep the articles pinned to the wall beside my bed, but mom said first of all that's super morbid and second of all stop poking holes in the nicely painted wall.

I kept collecting the articles though. The box is almost full, I have to fold them very carefully to make sure that no corners are sticking out. Then the box goes under my bed, behind the white ruffley part that hangs down.

No one knows where Patty is. It's been so long that people are starting not to care anymore. One of my articles even says that Patty's dad, the one who is rich like my dad, won't give two million dollars to get her back anymore. He changed his mind. Does he think that she really joined the kidnapping people? Does he think that she really wants to change her name to Tania and rob banks and never go back to living a happy and normal life with her family?

If I was going to change my name, I would change it to Margaret and go by Margie for short. If I was



going to rob a bank, I would make sure not to shoot anybody. I would just take all the money and give it to my mom.

\*

James built two ramps for his skateboard. His dad helped, even though his mom didn't think it was a good idea. Two ramps instead of one so he can go back and forth on our dead end street, going up one ramp and then down and then up the other and then down.

I would like to go out and sit on the grass and watch him use his ramps. I would like to try his skateboard. But Mom and Dena are out again buying back-to-school clothes and I'm too afraid that without them the kidnappers will come and when they get back I'll just be gone. And maybe, like what happened with Dad, they won't even look for me. Mom will just look around the house, shrug her shoulders, and sigh, "She's gone." That's what she did when Dad was gone. She didn't even leave the house to find him. She didn't even call the police.

I wanted her to. I knew about Patty Hearst then too. I knew that when people go missing it's because someone bad has taken them. I begged her and begged her to call the police and instead of doing it she just sat down on her bed with me and put her arms around me and rocked me back and forth telling me "Shhhh, it's okay." I knew it wasn't okay. No matter how many times she said it.

Of course now I know that Dad is all right and that it was his new girlfriend, the rich one, who took him

away and not some criminals or revolutionaries. But that doesn't mean that they aren't going to come and get me. Especially now that he's rich. And if Mom doesn't call the police then it will take them forever to find me. They still haven't found Patty Hearst.

From my bedroom window, sitting on my bed, I can watch James on his skateboard. I can see the grass of our lawn and think about how it would feel on my feet if I took my shoes off and walked on it. James goes up one ramp and then down it, then up the other one and down. No one is outside watching him, but after he does well he looks around a little bit like he's waiting for someone to tell him that he's doing a good job.

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I won't go and visit Dad because I'm sure that the kidnappers would get me if I went there. They would know for sure that I was from a rich family. Dena says that I'm being idiotic. She thinks that I won't go because I'm upset about the divorce. I haven't told her about the kidnapping, even though I guess she might get kidnapped too. I feel like if I talk about it the kidnappers might know that I know they are coming and they might find an even sneakier way to get me.

I did try to go for a visit one time. Dad picked us up in his car which still had the same Emmy Lou Harris music on the radio that it used to have. It smelled like Dad, like cigarettes and Livesavers candy and laundry. For just one minute it felt nice to get into that car and put my head against the itchy blanket that was still covering the backseat. Dena was talking like

crazy, going on and on about her gymnastics class. Dad was laughing and driving and looking at us in the rearview mirror.

When I started to think about the kidnappers and watching out the window for them I all of a sudden felt sick in my stomach. I told Dad I was going to barf. But then he wanted to stop the car so I could be sick. I didn't want him to stop driving because the kidnappers might come.

"I have to stop the car, Allison, if you're going to be sick."

"No! I mean, I'm okay. I won't be sick."

"Don't be so stupid," Dena said, "I don't want you to barf all over me."

"Dean, that's enough." Dad's face in the rearview mirror looked stressed out. "Allison, I'm going to stop the car."

My stomach felt worse and my heart started beating really fast. I could feel the barf coming.

"No, Dad!" I said and then I couldn't say anything else because I was throwing up all over my feet and the floor of the car. Dena started screaming immediately, yelling about how gross it was and freaking out because this one little tiny spot of barf had landed on her leg.

Dad pulled the car over right away and opened my door to get me out. I started crying and yelling that I wasn't going to get out and in the end Dad had to pick

me up and carry me out of the car and I think I accidentally kicked him in the stomach because I did not want to get out.

I just kept yelling, "Take me home! Take me home!"

I wanted to be as far away from Dad's rich apartment as possible.

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The next morning when I woke up Mom was acting like I had the flu. My stomach felt fine, though. But my neck and my shoulders hurt. I told her about it when she came in and sat on the edge of my bed. Dena was still at Dad's apartment.

Mom put her hand on my neck and squeezed it a little.

"Oh Allison," she said, shaking her head and looking at the floor "You need to relax."

Later that afternoon she went out shopping and came back with a round container that had a tiger on the front of it.

"This will make your shoulders feel better," she said. I had to take my shirt off so she rub it on my neck. I'm ten now. I don't like to take my shirt off in front of anyone, even my mom. I did it anyway.

The stuff made my skin feel like it was burning. It smelled like cinnamon hearts and medicine.

"You're torturing me!" I told Mom. "This isn't relaxing! It's TORTURE!"

"It will make you feel better in a minute, Allison," Mom said. She closed the door behind her when she left the room.

\*

I know that Patty Hearst says that she likes her kidnappers now. She even said that she is in love with that one guy, Willie. Gross. I admit that I know that love is a screwed up thing and I think sex is even more screwed up and it makes people do crazy things. But I really don't think that she's joined in with her kidnappers. Even though there was the video of her robbing the bank that made everyone go crazy. And even though she says she changed her name and that she's a revolutionary now, I know that all she wants is to be back at home with her family.

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I'm back to school in grade five now. And Patty Hearst got found! She got arrested with two of her kidnappers in San Francisco. There were so many pictures of her in the paper I had to take all my articles and move them from Dad's old box and into the box that my new school shoes came in. I put a picture of Patty on the top of the box, attached with clear tape. It is the picture of her when she got put in jail. Two pictures actually, one from the front and one from the side, with her holding the little sign in front of her on the sideways one. She looks so pretty in the picture and her hair-do is perfect. I wonder how that happened?



\*

Patty Hearst is still in jail and I can't sleep. I look out the window at our street. It is dark. James' wooden ramps were sitting in his driveway, one stacked on top of the other one. There was a whole bunch of dry leaves all around them and I know they are going to be put away in the garage for winter soon. Already we were having to wear our sweatshirts and ski vests to school.

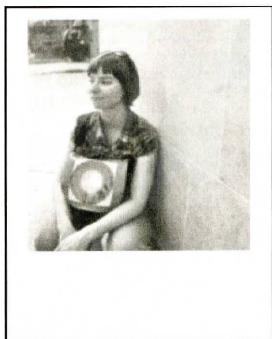
I am a bit less scared about the Patty Hearst kidnappers because most of them are either dead or in jail, but I still can't sleep. Dena is at Dad's new apartment, probably eating popcorn popped with his new popcorn maker and watching a movie on his big colour TV that doesn't flip the picture around like ours does.

I feel like I can leave my room and go see what mom is doing downstairs. It is a new feeling. I used to never leave my room after it got dark, even if Dena was still awake and doing something fun downstairs.

When I get to the top of the stairs I can hear music and smell something funny. The music is *Desperado* by the Eagles and it is Mom's favourite right now. Every time it comes on the radio in the car she turns it up. And she bought the record at the creepy little store next to that place where we get our cat food. It is the only record we have in our house right now because Dad said the others were his and he took them to his new apartment.

I climb down to the fifth stair from the top and sit down with my nightgown pulled tight over my knees and feet. I can see Mom in the living room. She is smoking a cigarette that smells like the cigarettes that Dad used to smoke sometimes. The same smell that is in my old article box. There is smoke all around her, like the fog that we sometimes drive through when we go to school early. She is crying, and the music and the smoke are filling up all the air around her. I think she must be worried about me being kidnapped, maybe worried because Dena is at Dad's and it is more dangerous there, because if we are there, the kidnappers will know for sure that we are rich.

When I go back to bed I have that song in my head. It is almost like a lullaby.



[www.matildazine.org](http://www.matildazine.org)  
[jennifer@matildazine.org](mailto:jennifer@matildazine.org)