



It's like looking for a lost pair of sunglasses, Donna's mother thinks. Where'd you see them last? Where did she see Donna last? What happened that day when Donna asked if she could walk to Mercer Park with her friends and go ice skating? What happened the day before that? The day before *that*? When was the day where Donna disappeared—the way those nice Bausch + Lomb sunglasses slipped between the couch cushions last summer and no one could find them, until she offered a two-dollar reward? But then she remembers: the boys actually stole those sunglasses and hid them, expecting reward money. Everyone laughed, but no one can control those boys, probably not even the U.S. Army, which is why she's sure they'll get shot up in Vietnam. The stories that shimmer in her mind are about the boys—getting banned from Mercer Pool for a week for cannonballing the deep end lifeguard, the copied homework at Southeast Junior High and the stolen test, sneaking the car out without permission, swiping her cigarettes, on and on, those boys filling her mind and prayers, how they devour any crumb of energy she has. Three boys, boom-boom-boom, like that, and oh my, how that was plenty, five years separating them, making maybe eight solid years of diapers and potty training. Three busy boys who spilled and broke and hit and bit and bled and barfed and went wee-wee anywhere they wanted.

Then Donna's father said, "We need a little girl," and she was supposed to say yes. "Someone to dress up and fuss over," he said, "sugar and spice and everything nice. One pretty little princess, all lace and light." What if it's another boy, she wondered and worried, then asked. "You won't let that happen," he said, "because we've got a handful of those already, right?"

No, Donna's mother didn't let that happen, and Donna was all the things she was supposed to be, especially "sweet, like her sweet mama," as Donna's father told everyone. How does a sweet girl disappear?

"When did I last see her?" Again she's talking into an empty room.