

So off-kilter, the cops close together but she and her husband separated by chair arms and an end table holding a lamp and a freshly wiped ashtray.

No one smokes. She's certain everyone wants to. All it takes is one match, one person lighting up. She won't do it. She's strong. That's one thing about her, and that she's stubborn is another.

Twelve-year-old Donna's missing now for two weeks. She scattered from her friends, everyone walking to the park for ice skating (ice skating!), but instead, the cops said, Donna went on her own to Drug Fair to buy candy (rotting out her teeth when dentists cost money). All summer long neighborhood kids bike to Drug Fair, come home sunburnt and fine. But January?

"Does she have a reason to run away?" the cops asked that first day or two, promising she'll be back when she's hungry, tired; when she's bored, when she's ready.

My girl's twelve, Donna's mother thought. Ready for what?

Today, the cops stand straight and immobile, like telephone poles, while Donna's father sits alone, centered on the couch. Donna's mother is herded into the kitchen, told to wait at the table, where she thinks about smoking. No reason not to, alone here in the kitchen. She taps the pack of Winstons on the table, a nervous rat-a-tat. Blurry voices bump the swinging door, but she can't make out words, not even holding her breath and tiptoeing up close to the doorway. After an eternity of half an hour, it's her turn on the couch, with Donna's father already sent to the bedroom, so she can't read his face, meet his eyes. She won't lean back into the cushions, refusing comfort.

"What a difficult time for you," the cop says. "How are your boys?"

Who cares? She thinks exactly that before remembering she does care, is expected to. "Holding up," she says, praying they don't ask for names. Relief as their names rage like a river through her brain: Wayne Jr., John, Danny. She loves them *too*, loves *all* her children.

"Is there anything else you want us to know?" the other cop says. "Something you remember from that day or before that might shed light