

Punk

by kim teeple

My mother used to say she'll be just like you and you'll deserve it. I was a Punk Rocker. A rebel. Emily worries about things like grades and sports. She's on the soccer team. I got stoned under the bleachers. Emily, is a good kid.

Not that Emily has ever tried to put one past me, but I think I would know if she was smoking pot or if she had a hangover. I'd know if she was having sex or lying about anything, at least this is what I tell myself, but sometimes, I'm not always so sure. She is not me I reassure myself when I look in the mirror, when I pull my hair over my tattoo.

The school's principal steps onto a wooden stage and stands behind a podium with a microphone. He has pink cheeks and small shoulders and he wears a brown sweater vest over a blue shirt like his mother dressed him. He says how there's been an epidemic; the kids are all saying the word fuck to each other. In the hallways, in the classrooms, at lunch. They're saying it the way you say cool, or awesome. They high-five and say Fuck. The parents gasp. Some of them try out the word for themselves. Fuck, they say it under their breath. It feels powerful and a little naughty.

The next day I get a call from school and have to meet with the principal. He smiles at me his teeth are small but perfect. Emily yelled the word fuck in the hallway and this, as was discussed yesterday in the gymnasium, is grounds for suspension. He presses his palms together in front of his chin like he's praying then points his pressed hands toward me when I tell him I don't believe it was Emily, how I've never heard her say any swear word at all, not even

shit or damn. He looks at me sideways like I'm the child. I don't like him, and I don't want them to suspend Emily from school.

My mother worked during the day and I skipped school. This was when the teachers still had to call home or send a note and the teachers all looked tired. I practically got away with murder. Okay, I tell the principal, do what you have to do. I pull a rubber band from my purse and put my hair up in a high ponytail so when I leave,

He can see the word Fuck tattooed in black ink across the top of my shoulders.

