



PATRICIA

Richard Zielinski

WHEN I WAS 16 AND LIVING in the Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh, my best friend Norm asked me if I wanted to go to his uncle's house in Lawrenceville to drop off some tools that his father had borrowed. He didn't tell me he had a 13-year-old cousin, Patricia. Norm knew I was obsessed with another girl, Linda, and I guess he was trying to break the spell she had put on me.

When we got to Norm's uncle's, the sun was beating down and the wind barely whispered. Patricia was sitting on the concrete porch steps with her girlfriend. She was shaded by a green and white awning and surrounded by a white metal railing with poles that looked like twisted licorice sticks. As we approached, Patricia frowned, but I didn't know if it was for me or for Norm. She had a cute mouth with lips as thin and