

**From *Girls Turned Like Dials* by Liz Robbins**

**Parked by a River**

We teens gathered late at night by a river, the park full of wind, space, trees—the river, not owned by anyone. Our lives

spread out like smudged paper sheets covered with lightly-drawn buildings. So good, the night, making corners to hide in.

Boyfriends, girlfriends, one-night stands—we were safe from knowing ourselves fully. On a Friday night, only a certain kind

could retire alone with a book to a dim lit room. Who was I afraid of becoming? Drinking beer, smoking in groups near the river's edge,

we made pledges to our imagined selves at thirty: never to go to bed early, never to stay at home to watch TV. Never to cut our hair, drive

vans, live in this town. So unsure, we could deal only in negation. All around, green leaves clustered on oaks, boys pooled at one end,

surgeons tinkering deep beneath hoods, removed, learning to use power. Authority of wrenches, revved engines. Gentle burn, how

from a radio The Stones played "Under My Thumb," with all the girls turned like dials to where the boys stood.