

The Runaways

By Asha Akkinapally – Richard Montgomery High School

The year was 1954 when two twenty-two-year-old girls slipped out of the comfort of their Bethesda homes and into the waiting August night.

Their families were unaware of their departure; it wouldn't have been permitted. They carried little luggage, as few things are necessary when starting a new life. Leaving is the most important part. And they were leaving everything they had ever known.

Both of the girls had fallen in love, and now they were running to it.

According to everyone, Adelaide Miller was trouble.

Trouble wound its fingers through her frizzy curls, it hid in the creases of her unironed clothes, it crouched in corners of her small house, it buckled next to her in her brother's Ford, and it lingered at the corners of her mischievous smile, a smile that brought a slight feeling of trepidation upon the person it was directed towards.

Oh, and she was strange. She was an oddity, out of place. She couldn't even be compared to a sore thumb, because at least that could be explained. Adelaide was like people who hated chocolate—she didn't make sense.

Nothing, it seemed, could make people think of her as anything more than trouble.

Nothing except the love of her life.

January 5, 1943

Otherwise known as the day Adelaide Miller fell in love.

“I can’t believe Mark is going to juvie,” Charlie, the youngest of her brothers and the one closest to her in age, said sadly. “He’s so nice—I find it hard to believe he was stealing.”

“Not just stealing—he robbed a month’s worth of profits,” Robby pointed out.

“Allegedly. I think he was framed for the crime. Besides, why would he do it?” Billy said. “Let’s hurry, we don’t want to be late.”

They all filed into the court, wedging into one of the back rows. They had gone to see the trial of Billy’s friend, Mark, who had been accused of stealing from a jewelry store. But most of the audience were people who knew him, and knew there was no possible way he could have committed the crime. He was the type who helped old ladies cross the street, the kind that would remember everything about everyone. Not a thief.

The court was soon called to order and the trial proceedings began. From the first words of the opening statements, Adelaide was entranced. Mark had been framed, his lawyer proved. In just a few hours, something they had all thought to be true, a belief, weighty in their minds but substanceless elsewhere, had formed into a solid, indisputable fact. It was, Adelaide felt, its own sort of magic.

Sitting there, in that courtroom, sandwiched uncomfortably between her brothers, Adelaide Miller decided that she wouldn’t follow the path her parents had laid for her. She refused to become a housewife. She would become a lawyer because she had fallen in love with the law. How unfortunate.