

"A tour de force."  
—DAVID GRANN



*The*

# REAL LOLITA

*The Kidnapping of Sally Horner and the  
Novel That Scandalized the World*



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SARAH WEINMAN





THE  
REAL LOLITA

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and the Novel That Scandalized the World*



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*An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers*

# Dedication

*For my mother*

## Epigraphs

You have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy, with a bubble of hot poison in your loins and a super-voluptuous flame permanently aglow in your subtle spine (oh, how you have to cringe and hide!), in order to discern at once, by ineffable signs—the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb, and other indices which despair and shame and tears of tenderness forbid me to tabulate—the little deadly demon among the wholesome children; *she* stands unrecognized by them and unconscious herself of her fantastic power.

—Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

I want to go home as soon as I can.

—Sally Horner, March 21, 1950

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## Introduction

### *“Had I Done to Her . . . ?”*

*“Had I done to Dolly, perhaps, what Frank Lasalle, a fifty-year-old mechanic, had done to eleven-year-old Sally Horner in 1948?”*

—Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

A couple of years before her life changed course forever, Sally Horner posed for a photograph. Nine years old at the time, she stands in front of the back fence of her house, a thin, leafless tree disappearing into the top right-hand corner of the frame. Tendrils of Sally’s hair brush her face and the top shoulder of her coat. She looks straight ahead at the photographer, her sister’s husband, trust and love for him evident in her expression. The photo has a ghostly quality, enhanced by the sepia color and the blurred focus.

This wasn’t the first photograph of Sally Horner that I saw, and I’ve seen a great many more since. But this is the one I think of the most. Because it’s the only photo where Sally has a child’s utter lack of guile, without any idea of what horrors lie ahead. Here was evidence of one future she might have had. Sally didn’t have a chance to live that one out.



*Florence “Sally” Horner, age nine.*

FLORENCE “SALLY” HORNER disappeared from Camden, New Jersey, in mid-June 1948, in the company of a man calling himself Frank La Salle. Twenty-one months later, in March 1950, with the help of a concerned neighbor, Sally telephoned her family from San Jose, California, begging for someone to send the FBI to rescue her. Sensational coverage and La Salle’s hasty guilty plea ensued, and the man spent the remainder of his life in prison.

Sally Horner, however, had only two more years to live. And when she died, in mid-August 1952, news of her death reached Vladimir Nabokov at a critical time in the creation of his novel-in-progress—a book he had struggled with, in various forms, for more than a decade, and one that would transform his personal and professional life far beyond his imaginings.

Sally Horner’s story buttressed the second half of *Lolita*. Instead of pitching the manuscript into the fire—Nabokov had come close twice, prevented only by the quick actions of his wife, Véra—he set to finish it, borrowing details from the real-life case as needed. Both Sally Horner and Nabokov’s fictional creation Dolores Haze were brunette daughters of widowed mothers, fated to be captives of much older predators for nearly two years.

*Lolita*, when published, was infamous, then famous, always controversial, always a topic of discussion. It has sold more than sixty



million copies worldwide in its sixty-plus years of life. Sally Horner, however, was largely forgotten, except by her immediate family members and close friends. They would not even learn of the connection to *Lolita* until just a few years ago. A curious reporter had drawn a line between the real girl and the fictional character in the early 1960s, only to be scoffed at by the Nabokovs. Then, around the novel's fiftieth anniversary, a well-versed Nabokov scholar explored the link between *Lolita* and Sally, showing just how deeply Nabokov embedded the true story into his fiction.

But neither of those men—the journalist or the academic—thought to look more closely at the brief life of Sally Horner. A life that at first resembled a hardscrabble American childhood, then became something extraordinary, then uplifting, and, last of all, tragic. A life that reverberated through the culture, and irrevocably changed the course of twentieth-century literature.

I TELL CRIME STORIES for a living. That means I read a great deal about, and immerse myself in, bad things happening to people, good or otherwise. Crime stories grapple with what causes people to topple over from sanity to madness, from decency to psychopathy, from love to rage. They ignite within me the twinned sense of obsession and compulsion. If these feelings persist, I know the story is mine to tell.

Some stories, I've learned over time, work best in short form. Others break loose from the artificial constraints of a magazine article. Without structure I cannot tell the story, but without a sense of emotional investment and mission, I cannot do justice to the people whose lives I attempt to recreate for readers.

Several years ago I stumbled upon what happened to Sally Horner while looking for a new story to tell. It was my habit then, and remains so now, to plumb obscure corners of the Internet for ideas. I gravitate toward the mid-twentieth century because that period is well documented by newspapers, radio, even early television, yet just outside the bounds of memory. Court records still exist, but require extra rounds of effort to uncover. There are people still alive who remember what happened, but few enough that their recollections are on the cusp of vanishing. Here, in that liminal space where the contemporary meets the past, are stories crying out for greater context and understanding.

Sally Horner caught my attention with particular urgency. Here was a young girl, victimized over a twenty-one-month odyssey from New Jersey to California, by an opportunistic child molester. Here was a girl who figured out a way to survive away from home against her will, who acted in ways that baffled her friends and relatives at the time. We better comprehend those means of survival now because of more recent accounts of girls and women in captivity. Here was a girl who survived her ordeal when so many others, snatched away from their lives, do not. Then for her to die so soon after her rescue, her story subsumed by a novel, one of the most iconic, important works of the twentieth century? Sally Horner got under my skin in a way that few stories ever have.

I dug for the details of Sally's life and its connections to *Lolita* throughout 2014 for a feature published that fall by the Canadian online magazine *Hazlitt*. Even after chasing down court documents, talking to family members, visiting some of the places she had lived—and some of the places where La Salle took her—and writing the piece, I knew I wasn't finished with Sally Horner. Or, more accurately, she was not finished with me.

What drove me then and galls me now is that Sally's abduction defined her entire short life. She never had a chance to grow up, pursue a career, marry, have children, grow old, be happy. She never got to build on the fierce intelligence so evident to her best friend that, nearly seven decades later, she spoke to me of Sally not as a peer, but as a mentor. After Sally died, her family rarely mentioned her or what had happened. They didn't speak of her with awe, or pity, or scorn. She was only an absence.

For decades Sally's claim to immortality was as an incidental reference in *Lolita*, one of the many utterances by the predatory narrator, Humbert Humbert, that allows him to control the narrative and, of course, to control Dolores Haze. Like Lolita, Sally Horner was no "little deadly demon among the wholesome children." Both girls, fictional and real, *were* wholesome children. Contrary to Humbert Humbert's assertions, Sally, like Lolita, was no seductress, "unconscious herself of her fantastic power."

The fantastic power both girls possessed was the capacity to haunt.

I FIRST READ *LOLITA* at sixteen, as a high school junior whose intellectual curiosity far exceeded her emotional maturity. It was something of a self-imposed dare. Only a few months earlier I'd breezed through *One Day in*

*the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Some months later I'd reckon with *Portnoy's Complaint* by Philip Roth. I thought I could handle what transpired between Dolores Haze and Humbert Humbert. I thought I could appreciate the language and not be affected by the story. I pretended I was ready for *Lolita*, but I was nowhere close.

Those iconic opening lines, "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta," sent a frisson down my adolescent spine. I didn't like that feeling, but I wasn't supposed to. I was soon in thrall to Humbert Humbert's voice, the silken veneer barely concealing a loathsome predilection.

I kept reading, hoping there might be some salvation for Dolores, even though I should have known from the foreword, supplied by the fictional narrator John Ray, Jr., PhD, that it does not arrive for a long time. And when she finally escapes from Humbert's clutches to embrace her own life, her freedom is short-lived.

I realized, though I could not properly articulate it, that Vladimir Nabokov had pulled off something remarkable. *Lolita* was my first encounter with an unreliable narrator, one who must be regarded with suspicion. The whole book relies upon the mounting tension between what Humbert Humbert wants the reader to know and what the reader can discern. It is all too easy to be seduced by his sophisticated narration, his panoramic descriptions of America, circa 1947, and his observations of the girl he nicknames Lolita. Those who love language and literature are rewarded richly, but also duped. If you're not being careful, you lose sight of the fact that Humbert raped a twelve-year-old child repeatedly over the course of nearly two years, and got away with it.

It happened to the writer Mikita Brottman, who in *The Maximum Security Book Club* described her own cognitive dissonance discussing *Lolita* with the discussion group she led at a Maryland maximum-security prison. Brottman, reading the novel in advance, had "immediately fallen in love with the narrator," so much so that Humbert Humbert's "style, humor, and sophistication blind[ed] me to his faults." Brottman knew she shouldn't sympathize with a pedophile, but she couldn't help being mesmerized.

The prisoners in her book club were nowhere near so enchanted. An hour into the discussion, one of them looked up at Brottman and cried, "He's just an old pedo!" A second prisoner added: "It's all bullshit, all his long, fancy words. I can see through it. It's all a cover-up. I know what he

wants to do with her.” A third prisoner drove home the point that *Lolita* “isn’t a *love story*. Get rid of all the fancy language, bring it down to the lower [*sic*] common denominator, and it’s a grown man molesting a little girl.”

Brottman, grappling with the prisoners’ blunt responses, realized her foolishness. She wasn’t the first, nor the last, to be seduced by style or manipulated by language. Millions of readers missed how *Lolita* folded in the story of a girl who experienced in real life what Dolores Haze suffered on the page. The appreciation of art can make a sucker out of those who forget the darkness of real life.

Knowing about Sally Horner does not diminish *Lolita*’s brilliance, or Nabokov’s audacious inventiveness, but it does augment the horror he also captured in the novel.

WRITING ABOUT VLADIMIR NABOKOV daunted me, and still does. Reading his work and researching in his archives was like coming up against an electrified fence designed to keep me away from the truth. Clues would present themselves and then evaporate. Letters and diary entries would hint at larger meanings without supporting evidence. My central quest with respect to Nabokov was to figure out what he knew about Sally Horner and when he knew it. Through a lifetime, and afterlife, of denials and omissions about the sources of his fiction, he made my pursuit as difficult as possible.

Nabokov loathed people scavenging for biographical details that would explain his work. “I hate tampering with the precious lives of great writers and I hate Tom-peeping over the fence of those lives,” he once declared in a lecture about Russian literature to his students at Cornell University, where he taught from 1948 through 1959. “I hate the vulgarity of ‘human interest,’ I hate the rustle of skirts and giggles in the corridors of time—and no biographer will ever catch a glimpse of my private life.”

He made his public distaste for the literal mapping of fiction to real life known as early as 1944, in his idiosyncratic, highly selective, and sharply critical biography of the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. “It is strange, the morbid inclination we have to derive satisfaction from the fact (generally false and always irrelevant) that a work of art is traceable to a ‘true story,’” Nabokov chided. “Is it because we begin to respect ourselves more when we learn that the writer, just like ourselves, was not clever enough to make up a story himself?”



The Gogol biography was more a window into Nabokov's own thinking than a treatise on the Russian master. With respect to his own work, Nabokov did not want critics, academics, students, and readers to look for literal meanings or real-life influences. Whatever source material he'd relied on was grist for his own literary mill, to be used as only he saw fit. His insistence on the utter command of his craft served Nabokov well as his reputation and fame grew after the American publication of *Lolita* in 1958. Scores of interviewers, whether they wrote him letters, interrogated him on television, or visited him at his house, abided by his rules of engagement. They handed over their questions in advance and accepted his answers, written at leisure, cobbling them together to mimic spontaneous conversation.

Nabokov erected roadblocks barring access to his private life for deeper, more complex reasons than to protect his inalienable right to tell stories. He kept family secrets, quotidian and gargantuan, that he did not wish anyone to air in public. And no wonder, when you consider what he lived through: the Russian Revolution, multiple emigrations, the rise of the Nazis, and the fruits of international bestselling success. After he immigrated to the United States in 1940, Nabokov also abandoned Russian, the language of the first half of his literary career, for English. He equated losing his mother tongue to losing a limb, even though, in terms of style and syntax, his English dazzled beyond the imagination of most native speakers.

Always by his side, aiding Nabokov with his lifelong quest to keep nosy people at bay, was his wife, Véra. She took on all of the tasks Nabokov wouldn't or couldn't do: assistant, chief letter writer, first reader, driver, subsidiary rights agent, and many other less-defined roles. She subsumed herself, willingly, for his art, and anyone who poked too deeply at her undying devotion looking for contrary feelings was rewarded with fierce denials, stonewalling, or outright untruths.

Yet this book exists in part because the Nabokovs' roadblocks eventually crumbled. Other people did gain access to his private life. There were three increasingly tendentious biographies by Andrew Field, whose relationship with his subject began in harmony but curdled into acrimony well before Nabokov died in 1977. A two-part definitive study by Brian Boyd is still the biographical standard, a quarter century after its publication, with which any Nabokov scholar must reckon. And Stacy

Schiff's 1999 portrayal of Véra Nabokov illuminated so much about their partnership and teased out the fragments of Véra's inner life.

We've also learned more about what made Nabokov tick since the Library of Congress lifted its fifty-year restriction upon his papers in 2009, opening the entire collection to the public. The more substantive trove at the New York Public Library's Berg Collection still has some restrictions, but I was able to immerse myself in Nabokov's work, his notes, his manuscripts, and also the ephemera—newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, diaries.

A strange thing happened as I looked for clues in his published work and his archives: Nabokov grew less knowable. Such is the paradox of a writer whose work is so filled with metaphor and allusion, so dissected by literary scholars and ordinary readers. Even Boyd claimed, more than a decade and a half after writing his biography of Nabokov, that he still did not fully understand *Lolita*.

What helped me grapple with the book was to reread it, again and again. Sometimes like a potboiler, in a single gulp, and other times slowing down to cross-check each sentence. No one could get every reference and recursion on the first try; the novel rewards repeated reading. Nabokov himself believed the only novels worth reading are the ones that demand to be read on multiple occasions. Once you grasp it, the contradictions of *Lolita*'s narrative and plot structure reveal a logic true to itself.

During one *Lolita* reread, I was reminded of the narrator of an earlier Nabokov story, "Spring in Fialta": "Personally, I never could understand the good of thinking up books, of penning things that had not really happened in some way or other . . . were I a writer, I should allow only my heart to have imagination, and for the rest to rely upon memory, that long-drawn sunset shadow of one's personal truth."

Nabokov himself never openly admitted to such an attitude himself. But the clues are all there in his work. Particularly so in *Lolita*, with its careful attention to popular culture, the habits of preadolescent girls, and the banalities of then-modern American life. Searching out these signs of real-life happenings was no easy task. I found myself probing absence as much as presence, relying on inference and informed speculation as much as fact.

Some cases drop all the direct evidence into your lap. Some cases are more circumstantial. The case for what Vladimir Nabokov knew of Sally Horner and when he knew it falls squarely into the latter category. Investigating it, and how he incorporated Sally's story into *Lolita*, led me to

uncover deeper ties between reality and fiction, and to the thematic compulsion Nabokov spent more than two decades exploring, in fits and starts, before finding full fruition in *Lolita*.

*Lolita*'s narrative, it turns out, depended more on a real-life crime than Nabokov would ever admit.

OVER THE FOUR OR SO YEARS I spent working on this book project, I spoke with a great many people about *Lolita*. For some it was their favorite novel, or one of their favorites. Others had never read the book but ventured an opinion nonetheless. Some loathed it, or the idea of it. No one was neutral. Considering the subject matter, this was not a surprise. Not a single person, when I quoted the passage about Sally Horner, remembered it.

I can't say Nabokov designed the book to hide Sally from the reader. Given that the story moves so quickly, perhaps an homage to the highways Humbert and Dolores traverse over many thousands of miles in their cross-country odyssey, it's easy to miss a lot as you go. But I would argue that even casual readers of *Lolita*, who number in the tens of millions, plus the many more millions with some awareness of the novel, the two film versions, or its place in the culture these past six decades, should pay attention to the story of Sally Horner because it is the story of so many girls and women, not just in America, but everywhere. So many of these stories seem like everyday injustices—young women denied opportunity to advance, tethered to marriage and motherhood. Others are more horrific, girls and women abused, brutalized, kidnapped, or worse.

Yet Sally Horner's plight is also uniquely American, unfolding in the shadows of the Second World War, after victory had created a solid, prosperous middle class that could not compensate for terrible future decline. Her abduction is woven into the fabric of her hometown of Camden, New Jersey, which at the time believed itself to be at the apex of the American Dream. Wandering its streets today, as I did on several occasions, was a stark reminder of how Camden has changed for the worse. Sally should have been able to travel America of her own volition, a culmination of the Dream. Instead she was taken against her will, and the road trip became a nightmare.

Sally's life ended too soon. But her story helped inspire a novel people are still discussing and debating more than sixty years after its initial publication. Vladimir Nabokov, through his use of language and formal

invention, gave fictional authority to a pedophile and charmed and revolted millions of readers in the process. By exploring the life of Sally Horner, I reveal the truth behind the curtain of fiction. What Humbert Humbert did to Dolores Haze is, in fact, what Frank La Salle did to Sally Horner in 1948.

With this book, Sally Horner takes precedence. Like the butterflies that Vladimir Nabokov so loved, she emerges from the cage of both fiction and fact, ready to fly free.



## One

### *The Five-and-Dime*

Sally Horner walked into the Woolworth's on Broadway and Federal in Camden, New Jersey, to steal a five-cent notebook. She'd been dared to by the clique of girls she desperately wanted to join. Sally had never stolen anything in her life; usually she went to that particular five-and-dime for school supplies and her favorite candy. The clique told her it would be easy. Nobody would suspect a girl like Sally, a fifth-grade honor pupil and president of the Junior Red Cross Club at Northeast School, to be a thief. Despite her mounting dread at breaking the law, she believed them. She had no idea a simple act of shoplifting on a March afternoon in 1948 would destroy her life.

Once inside Woolworth's, Sally reached for the first notebook she spied on the gleaming white nickel counter. She stuffed it into her bag and walked away, careful to look straight ahead to the exit door. Before she could cross the threshold to freedom, she felt a hand grab her arm.

Sally looked up. A slender, hawk-faced man loomed above her, iron-gray hair underneath a wide-brimmed fedora, eyes shifting between blue and gray. A scar sliced his cheek by the right side of his nose, while his shirt collar shrouded another mark on his throat. The hand gripping Sally's arm bore the traces of an even older, half-moon stamp forged by fire. Any adult would have sized him up as middle-aged, but to ten-year-old Sally, he looked positively ancient.

"I am an FBI agent," the man said to Sally. "And you are under arrest."

Sally did what many young girls would have done in a similar situation: She cried. She cowered. She felt immediately ashamed.

The man's low voice and steely gaze froze her in place. He pointed across the way to City Hall, the tallest building in Camden. That's where

girls like her would be dealt with, he said. Sally didn't understand his meaning at first. Then he explained: to punish her for stealing, she would be sent to the reformatory.

Sally didn't know that much about reform school, but what she knew was not good. She kept crying.

Then his stern manner brightened. It was a lucky break for a little girl like her, he said, that he was the one who caught her and not some other FBI agent. If she agreed to report to him from time to time, he would let her go. Spare her the worst. Show some mercy.

Sally stopped crying. He was going to let her go. She wouldn't have to call her mother from jail—her poor, overworked mother, Ella, still struggling with the consequences of the suicide of her alcoholic husband, Sally's father, five years earlier; still tethered to her seamstress job, which meant that Sally, too often, went home to an empty house after school.

But she couldn't think about that. Not when she was about to escape real punishment. Any desire she felt about joining the girls' club fell away, overcome by relief she wouldn't face a much larger fear.

Sally did not know the reprieve had an expiration date. One that would come due at any time, without warning.

MONTHS PASSED WITHOUT further word from the FBI man. As the spring of 1948 inched its way to summer, Sally finished up fifth grade at Northeast School. She kept up her marks and remained on the honor roll. She also stuck with the Junior Red Cross and continued to volunteer at local hospitals. Her homeroom teacher, Sarah Hanlin, singled Sally out as "a perfectly lovely girl. . . . [A] better than average pupil, intelligent and well behaved." Sally had had a major escape. She must have been grateful for each successive day of freedom.

The Camden of Sally's girlhood was far removed from the Camden of today. Emma DiRenzo, one of Sally's classmates, remembered it as a "marvelous" place to grow up in. "Everything about Camden back then was wonderful," she said. "When you tell people now, they look at you with big eyes." There were pep rallies at City Hall and social events at the YMCA. Girls jumped rope on the sidewalks, near houses adorned with marble steps. Camden residents took pride in their neighborhoods and communities, whether they were among the Italians in South Camden, the Irish in the city's North Side, the Germans in the East Side neighborhood of Cramer

Hill, or the Polish living along Mt. Ephraim Avenue, lining up to buy homemade kielbasa at Jaskolski's or fresh bread at the Morton Bakery. They didn't dream of suburban flight because there was no reason to leave.

Sally lived at 944 Linden Street, between Ninth and Tenth Streets. Cornelius Martin Park lay a few blocks east, and the city's main downtown was within walking distance to the west, and the Ben Franklin Bridge connecting Camden to Philadelphia was minutes away. The neighborhood was quiet but within reach of Camden's bustling core. Now it isn't a neighborhood at all. The town house where Sally grew up was demolished decades ago. What houses remain across the street are decrepit, with boarded-up windows and doors.

Sally's life in Camden was not idyllic. Despite outward appearances, she was lonely. Sally knew how to take care of herself but she wished she didn't have to. She didn't want to come home to an empty house after school because her mother was working late. Sally couldn't help comparing her life with those of her classmates, who had both mother and father. She confided her frustrations to Hanlin, her teacher, who often walked home with her at the end of a school day.

It's not clear if Sally had close friends her age. Perhaps her desire to be accepted by the popular girls stemmed from a lack of companionship. Her father, Russell, had died three weeks before Sally's sixth birthday, and she'd hardly seen him much before then. Her mother, Ella, worked long hours, and was tired and distant when she was at home. Her sister, Susan, was pregnant with her first child. Sally looked forward to becoming an aunt, whatever being an aunt meant, but it made the eleven-year age gap between the sisters all the more unbridgeable. Sally was still a little girl. Susan was not only an adult, but about to be a mother.

SALLY HORNER WAS WALKING home from Northeast School by herself after the last bell on a mid-June day in 1948. The route from North Seventh and Vine to her house took ten minutes by foot. Somewhere along the way, Sally was intercepted by the man from Woolworth's. Sally had dared to think he'd forgotten about her. Seeing him again was a shock.

Keep in mind that Sally had just turned eleven. She believed he was an FBI agent. She felt his power and feared it, even though it was false. She was convinced if she didn't do what he said that she would be sent to the reformatory and be subject to its horrors, as well as worse ones conjured up

in her imagination. No matter how he did it, the man convinced Sally that she must go with him to Atlantic City—the government insisted.

But how would she persuade her mother? This would be no easy task, despite Ella's general state of apathy and exhaustion. The man had an answer for that, too. Sally was to tell her mother that he was the father of two school friends who had invited her to a seashore vacation after school ended for the year. He would take care of the rest with a phone call to her mother. Sally wasn't to worry—he would never let on that she was in trouble with the law. He sent the girl on her way.

At home, Sally waited for her mother to return from work, then parroted the FBI man's story. Ella was uneasy, and let it show. Sally sounded sincere in her desire to go to the Jersey Shore for a week's vacation with friends, but who were these people? Ella had never heard Sally mention the names of these two girls before, nor that of their father, Frank Warner. Or if she had, Ella didn't recall.

The telephone rang. The man on the other end of the line told Ella he was Mr. Warner, father to Sally's school friends. His manner was affable, polite. He seemed courteous, even charming. Sally stayed by her mother as the conversation unfolded. "Warner" told Ella that he and his wife had "plenty of room" in their five-room apartment in Atlantic City to put Sally up for the week.

Under the force of his persuasion, Ella let her concerns slide. "It was a chance for Sally to get a little vacation," she said weeks later. "I couldn't afford to give her one." She did wonder why Sally didn't seem to be all that excited about the vacation. It was out of character. Normally her bright little girl loved to go places.

On June 14, 1948, Ella took Sally to the Camden bus depot. She kissed her daughter goodbye and watched her climb aboard an express bus to Atlantic City. She spied the outlines of a middle-aged man, the one she took to be "Warner," next to Sally, but he did not come out to greet her. Ella also did not see anyone else with the man, neither wife nor children. Still, she tamped down her suspicions. She wanted so badly for her daughter to enjoy herself. And it seemed, from the first few letters Sally sent her from Atlantic City, that the girl was having a good time.

Ella Horner never dreamed that, within weeks, her girl would become a ghost. By sending Sally off on that bus to Atlantic City, she had consigned her daughter to the stuff of nightmares that would rip any mother apart.