

Squealing Tires by Nancy Archibald

"Want to come to the dance at the college?" Neil Raines said to Linda Hug and me after school on Friday night in June.

The arm of his leather jacket had long fringes that hung out the open window of his blue Volkswagen Bug. His black beard showed he was older than most of our high school friends.

"Yeah," I said.

Linda and I had planned on attending the dance, but we had no ride. I knew Neil well from going for coffee and french fries at the local hotel coffee shop. This was our opportunity. We piled into his Volkswagen. I pulled back the front seat to get in the back. Linda sat in the front.

We drove on the Calgary/Edmonton trail that took us out of town to Highway #2.

"I want to see this band," Linda turned said to me from the front seat.

"It's supposed to be good," I lied, just trying to carry on the conversation.

I wasn't as interested in the band as most of the kids in high school. I liked to dance and meet people in an atmosphere of any type of music and gaiety.

We turned onto the highway to the right, the opposite way of Red Deer College. This was something we were used to when we rode with our friends to Juniper Lodge for coffee. We always turned a u-turn at an approach in the road.

I watched as Neil turned the corner. He didn't stop. He didn't even check for traffic. He cranked the wheel. The tires squealed. We were about to flip over. The pavement reached up toward me. Lynda's blood-curdling scream etched in my brain.

What did I get Linda into? She was going to be killed. It was my fault.

The car stopped in mid-air, leaning to the side. Time stopped.

What was going on?

Paralyzed, I stopped thinking. It could go one way or the other.

Was I going to die tonight?

The Volkswagen moved sideways. It slowly fell back and bounced on its wheels.

We would not flip over after all.

We had no conversation for the next half hour as we drove to the College.

"Just drop us off at the front door," I said.

I wanted to get out of the car as soon as possible.

Later, when we talked to our friends at the dance, we found out Neil had been taking a trip on Mescaline that night. I knew he smoked marijuana at times, but this was serious. We found another ride home.

