

THE GOLD DARK SUMMER a boarding school story  
by Susan Papas

Extract

“The screaming had stopped.

The weeping that followed the screaming had stopped.

She lay curled on the wooden floor of the homework-hut, knees drawn up to her chest, forehead touching her knees. Eyes closed. A convulsive sob shook her body from time to time, though she was not aware of it. She was hardly aware of her surroundings, or of how long she had been lying there. She sensed she was alone, that Marigold had fled, and the windows that looked onto the great garden of Bracken Hill Boarding House were full of dusk. Darkness was devouring the corners of the room.

Her mind began to float up, away from her body. She looked down and saw herself curled motionless on the floor between rows of desks, pink cotton skirt fanned out behind her as though blown by a stiff breeze and frozen into place on the bare boards. Her white ankle socks glowed in the gloom. A toppled chair lay nearby. Pages from a sketchpad were strewn across the floor, pale as stepping-stones.

There would be time to face the consequences of what had happened, her mind told her. No need to think about tomorrow now. She must not think what she was in danger of losing, above all she must not think about Danny. Her exhausted body, depleted by fear and emotion, would rebuild its resources while her mind kept watch. And she would do what she did best when the going got tough. She would dream.

It was Sunday, the twenty-eighth day of June, 1959.

Her fourteenth birthday. ”