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Dawn Campbell
College of DuPage

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Girl From Chicago

Dawn Campbell

I'm a girl from Chicago.
When I was a kid
I really did
walk six blocks and ride three buses
to get to a school that was nearly ten miles away from the overcrowded one,
located directly across the street from my third floor apartment.
Yes, sometimes in ten feet of snow, but also on otherwise beautiful sunny days.

I'm a girl from Chicago.
I know the distinct scent of a laundry mat
and I know how many quarters it takes to do a week's worth of laundry
for a family of three...
two girls and a mom.

I'm a girl from Chicago.
I know the brutality of winter,
the value of a good shovel
and a broken down kitchen chair,
and I believe in a person's God given right to claim ten feet of a city owned street
simply because they worked their ass off for an hour after working a twelve hour
day
just to dig it out.

I'm just a girl from Chicago.
I don't know too much bout traveling the world,
but I can say hello and thank you in five different languages.
I know the difference between church and temple, Buddha, Allah, and God.
I know how to take the red line to China Town,
the blue line to Greek Town,
and that the best burrito around
can be found at the corner North Ave. and Pulaski.

I'm just a girl from Chicago.
I don't know much about cruising the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans,
but I do know that cruising down Harlem Ave. meant you were cool,
especially if you were in an IROC Z.

I'm just a girl from Chicago.
I don't know much about CAL-I-FOR-NI-A's Rodeo Drive,
but I do know how magnificent one mile can be,
and how at night, the Chicago skyline can shine as bright as Vegas or Times
Square...
or so I am guessing.

I'm a girl from Chicago.
I know what it means to sing the blues.
I know the definitions of WIC and Section 8,
the difference between the south side and the north shore,
the difference between new money and old, middle class and poor,
and I can tell you the anticipated wait time in the unemployment line
on any given day of the week.

I'm a girl from Chicago.
I love Da Bears, Da Bulls, and Da Hawks,
and I am a Cubs fan through and through.
I know the difference between a Cubs fan and a Sox fan
and I can tell you that most of the Sox fans I know are all born and raised North-
siders and for that reason alone I consider them traitors.
I also know all too well that Sox fans will defend their stance based on the sheer
quality of a ballpark's toilets and amenities...
Oh yeah, and something about a 100 years and a goat.

I am a girl from Chicago.
I get my news from the Trib and the Old Number Nine,
got my preschool education from PBS and made my TV debut at the age of seven
as an audience member of the Bozo Show.
I like mustard on my hot dogs, my Italian beef dipped, and my pizza thick.
I have quenched my thirst and my sun-kissed skin from the rushing waters of a
fire hydrant and I consider 55 degrees perfectly suitable weather for wearing
shorts.

I'm a girl from Chicago,
the perfect combination of feisty and sweet.
I can bake a cake, throw a football, do a cartwheel, climb a tree, hop a fence,
and double dutch jump rope.
I can be a real sweet talker, but sometimes I swear like a sailor.
I can hold my own and I don't take any shit from anyone.
I know that alleys and gangways are great for short cuts during the day,
but no place a girl should be at night.

And if you read this and know I'm right,
you just might be a girl from Chicago.