

# City Streak

*by* John Wentworth Chapin

Darlene's dad had sent her down here from the county to keep her from the drugs and the pregnancies that had trapped her older sisters. She missed him, but there wasn't really a place for her there anymore, and that was okay. She liked thinking of herself as the One Who Got Away.

When school was about to let out for the summer, she needed to find a reason to stay in the city, so she got a job around the corner sweeping hair at the little crummy salon that churned out little fat women with pinked curly hair. They had daughters they fought with and daughters-in-law they fought with worse. Darlene listened carefully; clearly, unless she figured out things for herself, she was in trouble no matter whether she was out beyond the bus line with her father or here in the city. The old women were miserable, and the young women were miserable. They all nestled up against convention and obligation, and it beat them down.

As far as she could figure, the only way not to be one of them was to be something else. She played with the coloring chemicals at the salon after hours; weird hair was enough to keep immediate trouble at bay for the short term. Keeping the world at arm's reach over the long term was going to take more than some colored streaks and unconventional cuts.

