

# I'm going and I'm never coming back

*by* Martha Rand

Clear water rippled. There was a tinkling. There was a gurgling sound. Any observer might have thought that ripples would progress outward, circularly similar to the way a stone thrown into the middle of a pond or a pebble in a puddle would create ever-widening waves. But not here. Here, in New Jersey, the ripples went from one side of the bowl to the other.

That was one image, sound and picture. Christina remembered. She was thinking of when she was seventeen. When there was a particular way she thought of her mother.

Christina and Sam had just been speaking.

"It has been three minutes and forty two seconds since you asked me a question about my college applications," Sam had said.

"Well," Christina flustered, "I'm only trying to keep you on track."

"Watch what I'm e-mailing you, there's no subject. I have to go to the dorm meeting. See you Saturday. You're picking me up, right?"

"Yea-ah,"

"Kay." The phone call was over. Sam was off.

Her daughter had sent her an image, sound and picture. Her seventeen year old daughter who had asked to go to boarding school instead of school in Basking Ledge had sent her a youtube link.

Christina was alone. Again. She opened the nearest laptop, only to realize it didn't have google chrome, and for some reason she needed that to view the video. Christina went upstairs to her little office and the newer laptop. She opened the newer, sleeker, black machine and got to her gmail.

A little girl is saying in a British accent, "Nag, nag, nag. This time I'm leaving and I'm not coming back."

Her Mom, a very young Mom is smiling down at her and she says something to the effect of, 'well, have you got your money?'

The little girl replies that the stuffed animal in her right hand has got the money.

Then the Mom asks who has the tickets. The little girl responds that the stuffed animal in her left hand has the tickets.

The Mom then says chirpily, "I guess you're off!"

The little girl turns and leaves. The big brother, perhaps twelve or thirteen comes out the door to find out what is going on. The Mom tells him not to worry, because his sister never crosses the big street. Mom beckons for him to follow around the hedge and see. As the Mom rounds the hedge, however, we see her look for a moment. Then we see her take off on a run, because apparently this time the girl means it. She is never coming back.

Christina finished watching and went to the bathroom. She was sobbing. She threw the tissue paper that she wiped her tears with down the toilet. She watched her mother's face as she had hundreds of times when she was seventeen. Only at seventeen much more was thrown up, and went down the toilet as the water wooshed and rippled. Once again her mother's face unfurled down the fuming funnel.

