

Lisa's Diary

Day 1

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've been waiting forever. Waiting for things to get better. Waiting for my mom to quit being so horrible to me. Waiting for things to change. Waiting for everything. But things never did change and I got tired of waiting.

I left while my mom and sister were out grocery shopping. I'm supposed to be grounded for breaking curfew last weekend. I was already grounded from the time before so I guess it didn't matter if I got grounded again. And now it doesn't matter anyway because I'm never coming home again.

I wonder when she'll realize I'm gone. She'll totally freak. She will lose it. She'll probably call my dad and make him come over. She'll call the cops, she'll call everyone. I kind of wish I could see it. She makes me crazy every day, may she'll know how bad it was for me living there. I'm headed south. Spent \$50 on a train ride and climbed aboard. Home seems really far away. I'm so happy to be gone.

Day 2

Dear Diary,

I talked to this really cool woman for a while on the train but then she got off. Her name is Carley. She gave me 20 bucks which will help. She told me she was worried about me and wished I would go home, but I told her I would never go home. After she left, I got pretty bored just riding so I got off the train too. I ended up in a town way smaller than mine called Mount Nathan or Nathanville or something lame. I got something to eat and it was like nobody even asked me what I was doing or where I was from. They just stared at me but no one said anything. I walked around and sat on a curb in front of a hair salon. I thought about cutting all of my hair off.. My mom always really loved my hair. She said it looked like hers when she was young. I can't even imagine my mom as a kid. She was always telling me what to do and how to act and how not to act. She told me I was a troublemaker and she said I was up to no good all the time. My mom was probably a total reject in high school. She probably never went out and never drank. My mom was always afraid for me. She never let me just be ME! She didn't understand that things are way different now than they were for her and there was no way I was going to live her pathetic life.

I went into Burgers & More to use the bathroom and wash my face. I stole a roll of toilet paper and stuffed it in my back pack. I feel like I'm on an adventure. I like the fact that no one knows me. I can totally start over. I went back to Burgers & More to eat. There were some other kids there and they looked like a bunch of geeks. Maybe they're all named Nathan.

I think about my sister. She's probably sad that I'm gone. She and I never got along great but sometimes she could be cool.. She's younger than me but she was always the favorite one. She was smarter and better at everything. Karla is so pretty. Karla has so much potential. Whatever. Karla will probably take over my room. It was the one thing I had that she wanted and now she probably has that too.

I wonder if my dad came over. I wonder if he shaved off his mustache by now. I wonder if he's still dating that woman who wore all that gold jewelry.

I decide to call my friend Jenny. Jenny's mom answered the phone so I just hung up. I wish I could have talked to her. I waited a while and looked at the pictures I had put in my address book. Jenny is totally crazy and I have this picture of her from the last time she had a party. We got so drunk on this punch her brother

made. That's when I got grounded the first time. My mom hates Jenny. I think she's cool and she would totally help me.

The cops came through the parking lot of the liquor store where I was using the phone. They didn't even stop but it kind of made me nervous. I don't think I could handle going to jail or juvee.

I slept on the train last night but I didn't know where to sleep tonight. I went behind an apartment building and hid under the stairs. I stuffed my backpack behind me and now I'm trying to sleep.

Day 3

Dear Diary,

I got woken up by a big ugly dog and it started barking and barking at me. The owner yelled at me and told me to get off of her back porch. I snarled back at her but grabbed by stuff. My back is real sore and I feel gritty. I had just started walking when the guy picked me up at the gas station. He asked me where I was going and I told him nowhere. He said he would give me a ride so I figured I should just go. This town is going nowhere anyway. So now I'm in his truck and we're smoking cigarettes together. Cool. The guy's name is Jerry and he turned out to be a total creep. He started asking me weird questions and looking at me funny. I was getting nervous like he wasn't going to let me out of the car when he started speeding up. I started to cry and I was trying to think of what I could hit him with if he tried to grab me. So I told him to just let me go and he pulled over. I'm so glad he just left. So gross.

It was like 9am when I walked into another town. I found a coffee shop and got a donut and a bottomless cup of coffee. The coffee was bad. It was kind of weak. We used to hang out at this coffee shop called My Friend Jo that's near school. Me and Stevie and JJ and Gamma and everyone. I wish I could hang out with those guys all the time. If I could have just lived at Jo's and not gone home, that would have been fine. When it's just me and my friends it's easy. We all understand each other. We're more like family to each other than my real family.

I feel so gross after that guy in his truck. It kind of makes me sick. I totally could have ended up as just another bad news story. I feel kind of funny. Like I'm tired and my head hurts. I wish I had something for my headache. I need a shower so bad. I never thought about where I was going to shower. I don't have a towel either. I just left all that stuff. I brought some clothes and money and some food. I miss my stereo and the sofa. If I was home I would eat something, take some medicine then lay on the sofa and listen to my music really loud. Then my mom would probably throw something at me and tell me to get a life. Forget it.

It's a school day. I wonder what's going on in school. People are probably talking about me. My mom probably went to Principal Ryan all crying in his office and stuff. They probably busted into my locker but they're not going to find anything. My mom always thought I was on drugs but I never was. I never even tried it. I've seen other people doing it but it's a little too harsh for me. They act so stupid and this one guy used the bathroom in his pants. I smoke cigarettes and I've been drunk but nothing more. I feel a little hung over, actually, but I'm not. But maybe I should try to find some vodka.

It's lunch time and I'm starving. I'm out of money. I can't find the \$20 that the girl gave me on the train. I went back to the coffee shop and talked to the guy in the back in the kitchen. AT the Taco Hut the kitchen guy would sometimes give us the stuff they didn't sell that day. So I tried to ask him for extra stuff but he tells me to get away and slams the door in my face. I can't believe I'm begging for food, but I'm so hungry. I can't even find a water fountain.

Right after school gets out I try to call Jenny again, but she's not home. I don't even know if I'm in another time zone. Maybe I screwed it up. I think about calling my house. I think about calling and laughing at my mom. I think about my sister and how she's doing. I miss my dog. I named her Dog. They don't know their names anyway. I hope they're taking care of her. It's getting dark and I've been walking all day. Just walking. I don't even know where to go. The paper says I'm in North Carolina. I wonder if my picture is in the paper at home. I wonder if they gave up looking for me. There was this little girl who was lost last summer and they found her body days later in a sewer. Poor thing. I wonder if she was really lost or what.

I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm hungry and tired and I can't even believe it. I just wanted to get away from home. I just wanted to get far, far away. And I guess I am - but I didn't want to live on the streets either. I don't want to be a bum and beg for food. I hate that I don't have somewhere to go. I don't want to go home but I want to go somewhere. I don't have money to go anywhere thought. I'm really freaking out. I decide to call my sister. I know she has money. Maybe she can help me somehow. Maybe she can find a way to send it to me. I am so nervous before I call.

My mom picked up the phone and I didn't know what to do. I was quiet. I had my mouth open but no words came out. She kept saying hello? Hello? Hello? They she was quiet too. I could hear my sister in the background and I was hoping she would hand the phone to her. She came back on and said, "Lisa? Honey?" and I hung up. I've seen all these movies where they trace calls and I didn't want her to know where I was. It was weird to hear her voice. She sounded scared. Good. But I know she must have been a wreck. If I was here it would be really bad to have your kid leave. I know it . I wish none of this had to happen.

I went to a dinner and sat at the counter. I told them I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. When the couple in the first booth left, I ran over there and took their left over food before the bus boy came. Then I ran so fast out the door. I went a couple of blocks and sat down in a park. It was so good to eat.

I fell asleep in the park but woke up when I heard this couple on the bench across the walkway. It was dark. They were totally making out. I was so tired. Someone stole my backpack. I can't believe someone ripped it off. Everything but my diary is gone. And my jacket. My stuff was under the bench when I was eating. I don't know what happened. I fell asleep on top of my diary or else I would have lost that, too.

I have never felt so alone. I wish the ground would just open up and swallow me. Maybe the inside of the earth is really pretty. Maybe it's a big garden and everything is sunny and there are flowers and birds. And I can sleep somewhere warm and clean and eat a really big bowl of ravioli and watch TV. I wish I had a normal family and I wish I didn't get grounded all the time. I wish my life was different. I wish I could be okay. I don't mean to be a screw up. I don't mean to be a disappointment. It wasn't my fault things got bad. My life is a total sham. Nobody knows me and nobody cares. If I got back now everyone will think I'm just some kid crying for help. It will probably only get worse. It's hopeless. My life is so hopeless.

I called Jenny again and finally got through. Her mom picked up the other line and asked who it was and she said it was Thomas her new boyfriend. I didn't even know she broke up with Matt, but I guess she did. Jenny and I talked and she told me my mom was a mess and everyone in town knew and she thought maybe I was dead. She wanted to know where I was and I told her I wasn't sure. I thought she would think that was kind of cool but she yelled at me and told me to get over it and come home. I was so shocked. She said she was so worried and she was mad at me. She told me I could have gone to her for anything and she thought we were better friends. I felt bad but it was good to talk to her. We were both crying. She told me to call my mom. She said if I came home that it would be a good idea. I don't know if I believe her. Honestly, I kind of what to but I'm scared. I feel like running away was just another screw up. Story of my life.

I start walking again. I'm in some kind of neighborhood. Lots of little houses all with garages on the side. This is nothing like Indy, I think. I wonder how close I am to the ocean if at all. I look at a couple of houses and I try to imagine what is going on inside. Is it perfect or is it a mess like my house. Is everyone sitting down for dinner or are they all just grabbing food and going to their rooms? Are people nice to each other? Are moms and dads together? This lady came down the street with her two dogs. One was a lab and one a collie. They're really cute. I asked her for some money so I could get something to eat. She wanted to know what was wrong and I don't tell her I couldn't go home.

We talked for a while but then she left. I was just sitting there when the cops pulled up. The stupid lady with the dogs called them on her cell phone. Who carries a cell phone while they're walking dogs? In this stupid place? I didn't even try to run. They weren't rough or anything. The older guy was like, "Just get in and we'll take you to the station." When we got there he bought me a fruit pie out of a vending machine. It was gross but good, too. I sat in an empty room for awhile. This other guy came in and talked to me about "my situation." I told him I was from Indiana and he asked me about the Indiana Pacers. Whatever. He asked for my name and I didn't give it to him. He gave me the same look my mom gives me when she's bad at me. He said, "Look, it's the end of my shift. I'm tired, you're tired, I'm hungry, you're hungry, and we both know this little vacation of yours is over. So tell me your name and let's just take care of business, shall we?" "Shall we? Like it was a deal! I finally gave him my name and he said he needed to check the computer but he would be back.

I'm sitting in the same room. I didn't want to take my diary out while he was in the room because I didn't want him to take it. I had it tucked in the back of my pants and covered by my shirt. I guess I'm really going home now. This stinks. I feel miserable. I feel like I want to throw up. I'm humiliated and stupid and useless and pathetic. My head still hurts and I really want to shower. I want some clean clothes and I want to brush my hair. AT least home has that. Dealing with my mom is going to be horrible. She is going to hate me even more. I'm going to be grounded for life. She'll never let me out. She'll never trust me. Karla is going to love this. She will be the big star. Thank goodness for Karla or we'd have nothing to be proud of. The cop comes back and says he found me in the computer. "No, you found me in the park," I tell him. He doesn't think I'm funny. He takes me to a shelter called Breakthrough. The drive took forever.

The lady there tells me that they're actually full but I can sleep on the couch in the living room. It's 3am. She told me the 6am worker would wake me up when she got in and then I would have to call my mom. I use the bathroom, wash my face. I'm still starving but I write in my diary before I sleep. This has been the worst day of my life.

Day 4

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've landed in Oz or something. This place is crazy. Arnold wakes me up at 6:30am and tells me I need to call my mom. I grabbed a piece of toast. They said they didn't have coffee. I miss Jo's. I talk with Arnie for like an hour. He was actually pretty cool. I told him about my mom and how we fight and fight and fight. I told him about how I break curfew and my mom doesn't like my friends and she says I hang out more than I study. I told him how critical she is of me and he said I was critical of her, too. Whatever.

Because I was out of state I was going to need a way to get home. Arnie said they were going to put me on a Greyhound bus and I thought that was fine. I wondered if I would meet up with that lady again somehow. In order to get a free ticket I had to call the National Runaway Switchboard and they would book me a ticket.

They stick me on a pay phone in the hall and I call the place. I talked to a guy named Pat and he was cool. I was like, "Don't make me talk about all of this again - it's torture!!?" But he was all right. I told him to just send me home but he said he wanted me to stay home too. I didn't really think about that. So we talked about my sister and school and Jenny and what my mom will do when I get home.

Pat put me on hold and called my mom. He was going to be the middle guy for us which was fine by me. I didn't want to call her. I wonder if I'll ever tell her it was me the other night who called then hung up. I saw a girl sneak out of the shelter to have a smoke and I wished I could have one. I would so much rather be having a drag than being on this phone. I thought about dropping the phone and going out there and I thought about just leaving all together. Just dropping the phone and heading out the door but then I thought I had no where to go. I didn't have any money or clothes or my stuff. So I stayed on the phone. I hate this. I heard this clicking noise and I thought we got hung up on. I was about ready to forget it when I heard my mom. She was pretty calm but she sounded as if she was crying. Pat asked if she was there and she said she was. Then she asked if I was on the phone and I said yeah. Pat wanted me to say something to my mom and my head started spinning and I was breathing like I had just run a marathon. I could feel myself start to cry but I didn't know why so I tried to stop it. Then my mom said my name and she started crying and that was it. We were both crying. I think she was happy crying though and I didn't know what kind of

trying I was doing. I wasn't happy because I was really unhappy but I felt real emotional anyway. We talked about everything and she said she was mad but she really, really wanted me to come home. She asked if I had eaten and wanted to know what I wanted for dinner. The thought of eating at my house seemed weird. Last night I stole someone else's dinner. I didn't tell her that. We worked out this plan and she's going to make me go to counseling, but Pat thought maybe we could try it together. I don't know but we'll see. Pay got me a ticket and when another person came in to work, Arnold drove me to the Greyhound station. I wanted to take a shower but there wasn't any time. Arnold gave me a sandwich and an apple and I ate them immediately. Like a piranha. He said I would be hungry the whole way home - it was almost the whole day - but I didn't care.

I'm on the bus now and no one wants to sit next to me. I guess I must stink and I look pretty awful. My eyes are all red from crying and my hair is all over. I haven't brushed my teeth in forever and my breath is probably so bad. I wish I had some gum. I don't have any bags so I just sit and keep writing. We stop in all these towns and people get on and off. I'm real scared of men who look like Jerry.

Day 5

Dear Diary,

I woke up from this freaky dream I was having. More like a nightmare. I dreamt I was in the park and it was daytime and then these dogs were chasing me and I was running and running then I tripped and fell over a cliff. I felt like I was falling and falling. Weird.

I have no idea what time it is. The sun is up and I guess we'll be coming into Indy at some point today. I've been on the bus forever. I am hungry again. I never really understood what people said when they talked about hunger but now I know.

I ask the driver when we get to Indy and it's only 20 minutes. I get kind of in a panic. I know my mom is going to be there and I don't know what it will be like. She was cool on the phone, but she was probably just glad I was alive. She might be mean again. She might not care. She might just tell me to shut up. I wonder if Karla will be there. I wonder what happened while I was gone. I hope she won't make me go to school tomorrow. I don't want to see anybody ever again. I am going crazy right now.

When we pulled in to the station, I got off last. I saw her first. She came running up to me and I braced myself. I stand real still. I could feel her just totally hugging me and I feel like I might stop breathing. I said, "mom I'm gross, you don't want to hug me," but she kept doing it. So I hugged her good. Karla was there and she was crying too. She said mom thought she would never see me alive again and it was really awful while I was gone. Grandma had come in from Gary just to help mom because she was so upset. My grandma really gave me a lecture when I got home. She told me I didn't respect my family and it was evil of me to run away. She said no grandchild of hers should ever have run away. I felt like I really disappointed her. That's how I felt the more and more I talked with mom.. I never thought I could disappoint her because I thought she didn't care about me. Part of me thought she would be relieved when I was gone, like "good - never come back", but she said she was depressed and missed work. I guess the thing is that I wanted to be somewhere else and so I left. Pat told me to think about how to make my home a different place then I wouldn't have to go somewhere different. It feels different already. I'm glad to be home. I know it could have been much worse. I guess I didn't think I might die. I just needed to get away. It was so awful to have nowhere to go. I didn't realize how many people even cared. I'm still scared. Like I know it won't be instantly better, but I don't think I'll ever run again.

