Writer’s Note

Paper Dolls came from a period I remember very well.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when I was in high school and college, I went to countless punk and alternative shows. They were loud, sweaty, chaotic places filled with mosh pits and people who looked like they had wandered in from entirely different planets. Sometimes you weren't completely sure you were going to make it out in one piece. Fortunately, I did.

I also worked at an alternative radio station, where I played bands like Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, L7, Sleater-Kinney, and others that carried that same rawness and anger. My friends played in bands, and I made concert flyers by cutting letters and images out of magazines, gluing them together like ransom notes, and plastering them around campus. The music, zines, flyers, battered equipment, grimy venues, and DIY culture in *Paper Dolls* weren't things I had to invent from research. They were things I remembered, but I didn't want to write a nostalgic museum piece about how cool the early '90s were.

I also remember how women were treated. I saw how hard they often had to fight simply to occupy the same space, and how quickly a woman who became angry or confrontational could have her message dismissed because people didn't like the way she delivered it. I wanted the period to feel exciting without pretending it was somehow enlightened.

A lot of that went into Molly. She has very good reasons to be furious, but as her voice gets louder, she begins deciding what other people should say, believe, and how they should say it. I became interested in the contradiction there. If you believe people deserve a voice, you also have to accept that they may use that voice differently than you would.

Molly's relationship with Juliet was equally important to me. They are two young women in love in 1991, and the world around them certainly has opinions about that, sometimes cruel ones. But their sexuality isn't the reason the story happens. They support each other, frustrate each other, hurt each other, make mistakes, and have to figure out what equality actually looks like inside their own relationship. Their sexuality is specific to who they are, but it isn't the only interesting thing about them.

I wanted *Paper Dolls* to celebrate what I loved about that era: the music, the handmade posters, the independence, the noise, and the idea that if nobody was going to give you a stage, you could build one yourself. But I didn't want nostalgia to sand away the harder parts of that world either.

I remember loving that scene and feeling like I belonged there. I also know there were people who had to fight much harder than I did simply to be heard. *Paper Dolls* came from wanting to remember both things honestly.