

# DRO

Deakin University's Research Repository

Miller, Alyson 2016, The twelve dancing princesses, *Softblow*.

**This is the published version.**

© 2016, Alyson Miller

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Available online from *Softblow*: <http://www.softblow.org/alysonmiller.html>

**Available from Deakin Research Online:**

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30080546>

## The Twelve Dancing Princesses

Their parents blamed a toxic conspiracy, something about chemicals creeping through the bedrock like a stain. Claimed it must be under the football field, poisons triggered by cheerleaders and runners punctuating the earth with the regularity of typewriters and bird song. Experts held the mystery as far away as continents, spitting out scripts for antibiotics and hysteria like seeds and broken teeth. On the television, the girls jerked as though possessed, necks and faces pulled hard into alien angles, voices annexed by unreal things. And the symptoms spread like a haunting, an enigma of muscle and some cerebral ghost that eluded X-rays and journalists and psychiatry. The small town, nervous of the water table and porous quarry rocks, shuttered down as tight as an eyelid. And the girls, locked in their rooms and skins, searched night skies and the patterns of leaf falls for some hint of return.