

The Night I Learned How Not To Pray

Iris DeMent

I was laying on my belly in the middle of the living floor
I was watching Howdy Doody so I'm guessing it was right around
four
When I saw my baby brother tumbling from the top of the stairs
He was lying limp and silent and the blood was trickling through
his shiny
Hair

When my mom saw my little brother she said you better run and get
your dad
And her voice was high and she was shaking so I knew that this
was bad
Well we stood out at the mailbox watching her and dad and brother
drive
Away
And I didn't waste no time I got down on my knees right there and
began to
Pray

Well I prayed into the evening, never even took the time to have
a bite
I was sure if I prayed hard enough that God would make it right
We were at the kitchen table long past bedtime when we finally
got that
Call
And I knew that it was over when my sister slammed that phone
against the
Wall

That was the night I learned how not to pray
God does what God wants to any way
And I never did tell my mother, I kept it from my sisters and
all my
Brothers
That was the night I learned how not to pray

It was 41 years later when I took my brother's picture out of a
box
Hung it on the wall and sat across from him and I began to talk
When the evening started I didn't know what I was going to say
But before the night was over I told them all about how I learned
not to
Pray

That was the night I learned how not to pray
God does what God wants to any way
And I never did tell my mother, I kept it from my sisters and
all my

Brothers

That was the night I learned how not to pray