

Foreword

What you are about to read is not a novel. It is a long and painfully honest journal with a newspaper article tacked on the end. Presenting the whole thing as a work of fiction was the publisher's idea.

As you will soon find out, this journal began as a project in Julia Fleischer's writing class at Portland Community College. Although it spans some five months, only the first thirty-four pages were handed in for credit. The remaining pages are, as Julia says, a record of "life experiences." They chronicle her beginnings as a cowgirl in Mt. Angel, Oregon, and the steps leading up to her explosive rise into the professional rock scene.

Two years have passed since her death, two long years, but there isn't a day goes by when I don't feel her presence. When she died, Julia had it all: a talented band, a million-dollar recording contract, dozens of friends who would have done anything for her that was humanly possible.

She also had Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, and eventually, it caught up with her. Yet she got farther than me or anyone else in her position could have gotten. I should know. As Julia's best friend, I saw her change from a jubilant young woman into something else entirely: A wide-eyed mystic with tales of angels and demons—accounts gathered from sojourns in a murky realm that divides our world from the next.

Julia's brushes with the supernatural were neither welcome nor appreciated. But rather than shrinking back in fear, she utilized each new experience to create a working model of God and the universe.

By this I don't mean to suggest that Julia Fleischer was some kind of spiritual seer or prophet. That's not for me to say. Everything she felt, everything she experienced in the last few

months before her death has been recorded here. Along with the songs on her album, those memories are all she had left to give, her legacy.

Bringing this manuscript to an agent was the hardest decision I've ever had to make, but ultimately I think it was the right one. Now Julia's message can reach the world—and by extension, you, the reader. That's who she had in mind when she wrote down her most personal secrets.

So if you begin to feel a bit like a voyeur, don't worry, it's part of the experience. To Julia, artistic integrity meant full disclosure. She wouldn't have had it any other way.

—Ruth Cohaine
July 1, 2002
New York City

Journal of Life Experiences

Julia Fleischer
Writing 121
June 14, 2001

ENTRY ONE

Jeff called to ask if he should buy me a ticket for Dee-Dee Ramone's show at the Satyricon. "We can watch the punks slam themselves into oblivion," he said. "It might be the last chance we'll ever get to pogo dance along to the Blitzkrieg Bop."

After hearing that, I couldn't possibly go. It would spoil the memory of the time I saw the *real* Ramones when Joey was up there on stage—all six and a half feet of him jumping up and down with his long black hair flying and his big nose sticking out in the most adorable way.

I tried to explain, but Jeff took it personally. He got all defensive and choked up, like he does when he feels not in control. The last thing he said before he hung up was, "Alright, fine. I'm going with or without you. And either way, I'm getting ripped. For Joey."

Excuse me, but is that any way to talk to your girlfriend of sixteen months? I think Jeff's starting to get the impression I'm stuck up because I've lost so much weight and other guys are looking at me for the first time in my life. If he keeps it up, maybe I *will* go out with some pretty boy just to piss him off.

ENTRY TWO

I'm supposed to be keeping this journal for my English teacher. His name is Mr. Oden and I'm in his Writing 121 class at Portland Community College. He said we could either write daily reactions to things that happen in Oregon and the rest of the world or just keep a personal journal of our lives.

We also have three essays and a pass/fail final exam that's an in-class essay. On top of that, he's got daily assignments and readings in our textbooks. Can you believe it? God, does my life suck. I won't even have time to pick my nose this term.

Yesterday when I got home from school, I almost went ahead and started the boring current events journal because I thought Mr. Oden might be a perv or something, you know, like he might want to spy on my personal life in a voyeuristic kind of way. Most English teachers are either pervs or homos. That's what my friend Ruth says. But I don't think Oden is either one. He didn't mean "personal" like that. He just meant a diary of the significant things that happen to us as our lives unfold and how we relate to the world.

I've had some time to mull over the whole thing, and I've come to the

conclusion that if I'm really going to do this assignment right, then I should pretend that I'm only writing for myself. I can edit out the private parts later.

ENTRY THREE

I like Mr. Oden's class, I guess. It's not always boring. But he tries a little *too* hard during the lecture. Especially if he's drinking coffee that day. His jokes are really weak but sometimes I can't help laughing. He makes all these puns and I've never heard a really good pun from anyone ever.

According to Ruth, puns aren't *kosher*. She's also in my class and she's Jewish. Her parents are transplants from New York (pronounced "N'Yawk"). She uses a lot of slang that she calls Yiddish. When I asked her about "kosher," she said it means that you can eat something without feeling religious guilt if you're Jewish. I guess it must have broader applications than just that because you can't eat a pun.

Ruth has very long blonde hair that's too frizzy and jet-black at the roots. I told her to let it go straight and natural, but I don't think she listened to me. I tried to convince her that guys notice if your hair is *long* and *silky*, the color doesn't matter as much. But she says blondes have more fun—at least according to Marilyn Monroe.

Ruth also plays dumb whenever a guy talks to her but I refuse to do that. She's way smarter than me, and I need to utilize whatever brain cells God gave me to the fullest.

Mr. Oden plays drums. He's in a band called Mammy Jammer. I think he must have thought up the name himself because it sounds suspiciously like a pun. Word around campus is Mammy Jammer's an alright band, at least by Portland standards. They've got a young lead singer who's a dead ringer for Ally McBeal. Also, they're the only act in Portland with three keyboardists.

In this week's *Mercury*, it said they're playing Dante's on Saturday night: The warm-up band for Saving Ophelia, this local band that sounds exactly like Dido. Maybe I can get Ruth to go. That would be too weird seeing our English teacher rock out. Two Friday nights ago, the line outside Dante's stretched practically all the way to the Burnside Bridge.

And Saturday night's even more popular than Friday. So I guess that means Mammy Jammer's front girl can do more than strut around on stage looking like the most annoying bulimic star on television.

ENTRY FOUR

Time for a little background info. This is probably the one and only chance I'll ever get to write my own personal liner notes:

Julia Annika Fleischer

- ø Born: June 14, 1979
- ø Height: 5'10"
- ø Weight: 153 lbs
- ø Hair color: "Dirty" blonde
- ø Eye color: Blue
- ø Born: Mt. Angel, Oregon
- ø Favorite bands: Hooverphonic; Björk; PJ Harvey; Esthero; Mazzy Star
- ø Favorite book: *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver
- ø Favorite movie: *Jesus' Son*. "We're wrecking like trains"
- ø Favorite night of the year: Halloween, or sometimes New Year's

I moved to Portland on my eighteenth birthday. For the first couple of years, I displayed my wares at the Saturday Market and shops in Old Town—handcrafted candles mainly. When I wasn't at work, I spent a lot of time hanging out with people on the street.

But I was different from most of my friends at that time and what separated me was a love affair with books. On my twentieth birthday, I calculated that I'd read approximately one thousand of them. And we're not talking about light reading, either. Just because I was out of school didn't mean I lacked ambition.

In some ways, I think I learned more in those two beautiful free years than all my hours in the classroom put together. I was like a girl possessed. Whenever I walked into the library, all the big names jumped out at me—Plato, Kafka, Einstein, Dante, Shakespeare—and I devoured them whole, picking my teeth with their spines.

Eventually, though, I wised up and decided to go to college. Even if I swallowed the entire cannon of English literature, it wouldn't get me hired without a degree.

I still don't know what I want to do in terms of a career, but I've been taking classes at PCC for the past three terms. It's not like high school. The teachers

don't even talk to you (unless you ask them a question). Some things are more formal and some things are less. Half my teachers introduce themselves by their first names to the class. I'm sorry, but that's just plain weird.

I want to go to Portland State University after I get my associates degree at PCC. Or maybe Reed College on Woodstock Blvd; it's supposed to be pretty wild, a throw-back from the sixties. And it's famous. Even Ruth's uncle in New York City has heard of "those crazy Reedies."

Most of the classes I've taken here have been in the sciences, but I'm starting to get interested in English. Fall term, I took Drama As Lit, and then I decided to go back and start taking writing classes because my instructor said I definitely had some talent there.

At first I wanted to take Creative Writing, but my drama instructor said I'd be better off taking WR 121 first—so I did, and that's what I'm doing now.

I met my best friend Ruth in Human Biology. She wants to be a doctor of some sort. She doesn't know what kind, but I'll bet she becomes a plastic surgeon or something totally useless to society. Don't get me wrong: she's got a big heart and all. She's just a little hung up on things that don't matter. Like looks. I think she should try to become a writer but I've never told her that.

I saw one short story that she wrote, totally amazing. It was about a girl who lived in a Kibbutz in Israel and had a housemate who discovered that datura, this hallucinogenic drug, was growing all over the countryside. He brewed up a big pot of the stuff and they all had a datura party. He was into Carlos Castaneda's books and so he knew how to prepare it using a little of the flowers and a little of the stems and a little of the roots, to get the balance just right.

Everyone got totally lit except for the narrator of the story. She just kind of kicked back and watched the freakshow. One girl took a bus to Tel Aviv and got lost and came back several hours later wearing only her bra (but it was a sports bra so it didn't look that unusual). The rest of the people had some pretty weird experiences.

Weirdest of all was the guy who made the datura soup. He disappeared and went out in the desert for the longest time. When he came back, he looked different. *Changed*. A little while later, everyone around the fire looked over at him in the shadows because he was laughing this really freaky

laugh; it almost sounded in stereo, like there were *two* voices laughing together.

Of course, it was only him standing there, but he had his arm hanging out in the air, like there was someone standing next to him. The way he was leaning, his weight seemed more on the invisible friend than on his own two feet and that just totally wiggled out everyone else because they noticed this. They overheard part of the conversation he was having with this invisible friend and they realized it was another language. But when they listened closer, it didn't sound like a language any of them had ever heard before.

The next morning, they asked the guy what he'd been speaking and he couldn't remember. He said he only knew how to speak English and Hebrew. Over the next few weeks, he started experimenting on all kinds of concoctions made from datura. Nobody else wanted anything to do with the stuff because they'd gotten such a splitting headache from the party, but this guy was hooked. He kept going and going until one day they found him out in the desert half dead. So they sent him to a clinic and kicked him off the Kibbutz.

I'm not really describing the story very well, but you get the idea. It was a cool plot and it had the added bonus of being 100% true. When I asked her about it, Ruth said she'd read a few of the Casteñeda books the housemate had left around. Don Juan, the narrator, explained how datura has a reputation for putting people in touch with the other side. And what better place for that sort of thing than out in the deserts of Israel where it's absolutely crawling with demons and angels?

I didn't want to seem *too* impressed with Ruth's story because she was kind of aloof about it, but I did ask for a copy. She seemed really flattered. I think I might submit the copy Ruth gave me to the school newspaper. I'll bet you anything they offer to publish it. Ruth will be so psyched if they do. Then she'd officially be a "Woman of Letters."

ENTRY FIVE

I've been a vegetarian since the seventh grade when I saw the butcher truck come out to the ranch and slaughter two of our best cows. Dad told me not to name any of the cattle or sheep, but I did anyway. All of them. It wasn't fair because the bulls and rams always end up with names, but I guess that's because they don't get slaughtered; they live like kings, the spoiled brats.

So Janet and Chrissie took a spike for us that day. Right through the head. The weapon looked like that thing in *The X-Files* they use to kill aliens with—the ones who can't be killed with a normal gun. This spike shoots out faster than the eye can see. It shot right through Janet's and Chrissie's foreheads and knocked them out so their throats could be bled with a minimum of fuss. One second they were scared and mooing—and the next, *wam, bam, thank you mam!* Goodbye Janet Jackson, soft chocolaty brown fur, big eyes and the prettiest moo you ever heard. Goodbye Chrissie Hinde, you sexy thing. No more shaking that tail to drive the bulls wild. No more pro lapses for me to sew up, no more nothin'.

My brother, Hans, thought I named Janet and Chrissie from the characters in *Three's Company*. He even tried to mess with my head and called the butcher "Mr. Roper." I hate *Three's Company*. All those stupid seventies'd-out shows. But I kind of liked the fact that Hans didn't know the real connection. I should never have told him their names in the first place.

That night, my mom served steak, of all things. I couldn't touch the food on my plate. Not after seeing Janet and Chrissie get the spike. Gravy is just cooked blood and it was soaking everything in death. I had to run to the bathroom. After hanging onto the toilet for dear life, puking my guts out, I went straight to bed.

And when I woke up the next morning, I just knew: Meat is murder, especially the red stuff. I'd never be able to touch it again.

ENTRY SIX

A lot of religions have this thing about cows. Mohammed wrote a whole chapter in the *Koran* about them. A kind of extended proverb. The Hindus think cows are sacred. In my opinion, that's going a little overboard, but they must be higher up on the cosmic pecking order than, say, chickens or turkeys.

There's a turkey farm on the way from Mount Angel to the rodeo grounds in St. Paul and it's the stinkiest most disgusting place on earth. One time, late at night, some activists from the Environmental Liberation Front cut the fence to set all the turkeys free. But instead of running away, most of the birds just cowered inside. A few intrepid ones got away and they ended up getting hit by cars on the road.

When the farmer who owned the place discovered what had happened, he rang the dinner bell and they all came waddling to the food troughs.

While they were gorging themselves, he and his neighbors tended to the fence. As a joke, he even left up the “calling card” ELF had spray-painted on the side of his barn:

Deaf to the language of the birds? We hear!

—ELF

Ah, well. Better luck next time, guys. I read all about it in the local newspaper. A grainy B&W photograph of the turkey rancher standing triumphantly in front of ELF’s slogan; it made the front page—not once, not twice, but three times. For months that’s all anyone in Mt. Angel would talk about. “Those environmentalist wackos.”

Yackety, yack yack. Day and night. Night and day. Enough to make you scream. And not one of them ever breathed a word of regret for those poor turkeys that died in the name of liberty.

If I’d been born a sorry bird in that feedlot, I would have run out of there so fast that no one could have caught me. So what if I got squashed in the middle of the highway? It would sure beat the heck out of a visit to the butcher so a family of humans could eat me, celebrating a holiday that’s supposed to embrace freedom but really just reinforces the same dull round.

Beast of burden, beast of prey: *One law for the lion & ox is oppression.*

I remember in Sunday School hearing this Bible story of a king who had a dream: Seven fat cows and seven skinny ones rose up out of a river and the thin cows devoured the fat ones. The king called in all his magicians and wizards and Nostradamus-like servants, but no one could help him, except Joseph, this Jewish kid who knew all about what the king’s dream really meant because God told him. God said it foretold a famine that would eventually starve all these Egyptians to death if they didn’t get their butts in gear and store enough grain to last them seven years.

Anyway, the point is, I had a terrible dream that night. The Bible is supposed to be comforting, but it can really scare the crap out of you when you’re little and impressionable. What a nightmare! Don’t let anyone tell you that people don’t dream in color. That dream was more vivid than the biggest movie screen you’ve ever seen in your life.

Time has faded the images, thank God. All I can remember now is that I had to relieve myself (in the dream) so I got up out of bed and went into the

bathroom. While I was sitting on the pot, I happened to look down at my stomach. It was clenched tight because I couldn't go pee-pee—even though my bladder was totally full—and I noticed in this horrible realization that my ribs were skin and bones, like those pictures of starving African children, all covered in flies—only my skin had a fine dusting of hair. And between my legs I'd grown a tail.

The next morning, I told my folks about the whole thing and they laughed it off. Dad said that being skinny was the least of my worries. If I ate my Wheaties, he promised I'd never turn into a cow. Maybe a pig, but not a cow.

ENTRY SEVEN

Before dad passed on at Portland Health Sciences University, he'd been having some absolutely God-awful dreams. The doctors said it was just a side effect from the Alzheimer's, but I know they were lying. It was a side effect from all the drugs they were pumping him full of. Even when he was awake, he would scream at the things he imagined were creeping up the blanket.

Every time I visited him, I tried to pick off every particle of lint or dust, anything that could pass for creepy-crawlies, but he still saw the things come alive and crawl up the sheets that he'd tucked so tightly around his neck.

That was near the very end after he couldn't really talk anymore.

When he could still put whole sentences together, and he was still himself, he would never have dignified a nightmare or bad daydream by speaking of them. Instead, he always wanted to hear about me and my life. Something to take his mind of his troubles. As I sat looking out the window of his room in the hospital, I tried to pick out only the good things: finding these really cool new outfits at thrift stores, going to see my favorite rock bands in concert, playing my guitar, getting the job at Rose City music.

Happy details, the little things that reminded dad of the outside world, cheered him up the most. Near the end of my visit, he would smile so warmly and blink the way he did when he wanted to show his love for you. Then he'd close his eyes and whisper how I'd made him proud. So slim and trim, so pretty. "Yes, m'dear, all the cowboys are gonna be fightin' over you. A few more years and you'll have your own ranch and a whole house full of little snot-nosed devils runnin' around!"

ENTRY EIGHT

It's Sunday afternoon and the weather is nice for once. Summer's definitely on the way. I'm writing this journal entry at a table in front of Café Lena. I like it here because it's one of the few places around that actually pays homage to writers. They've got pictures of all the great Beats on the walls. My favorite is this picture of Jack Kerouac and Neil Cassady. I've read *On the Road* three times and it just keeps getting better.

Last night at Dante's was awesome! Everyone was there: Ruth; her friend, Ginny; Joan Compton, who I've known since I first moved to Portland; and all these other students from Writing 121.

I've driven by Dante's a million times, but I've never actually gone inside because the cover at the door is always very steep. But Ginny told us that if we got there before eight o'clock it would be free. We all met at Hung Far Low's, a Chinese restaurant in the oldest part of downtown Portland. I ordered this plate of chow mien that ended up being totally disgusting, but the drinks were cheap and really strong so it made up for it.

We ended up getting to Dante's around nine o'clock. The bouncer—this really cool black guy with dreads—let us in without paying cover. I bet if we'd brought dates he wouldn't have been so willing to make an exception.

It was totally deserted inside. The décor was nice, though. Everything painted in red and this burning pot of coals by the window that flamed up like hellfire. I guess it's supposed to look the way Satan might choose to decorate his palace if he were entertaining, but I'm sure most people don't make the connection. How many clubbers in Portland know the difference between *The Inferno* and *The Towering Inferno*?

I put a few quarters in the pool table and played Joan a game of 8-ball. Then people started showing up and before we knew it, some guys had bought us these really expensive drinks, the kind with little umbrellas in them.

Usually, I don't accept drinks from people I don't know because of Roofies, etc., but I talked to these guys for a while and we played another game of pool with them as doubles and I could tell after that that they weren't the types to drug up girls. Judging by the way they were dressed in matching G-style suits you would have thought they were gay for sure. But they definitely made a point to check us out. One of them kept looking down my blouse every time I'd get down low to shoot the ball. I think he liked the

black bra I was wearing. After they won the game, they went in the bathroom and came out with red watery eyes.

Joan, who's really brazen, asked them for a hit of whatever it was they had, but they acted all surprised, so she let up. It was obvious they'd done some lines, though, because after a few minutes they got more drinks and started talking non-stop about themselves: fast cars, model girlfriends, vacations to Belize and Costa Rica... bla, bla, bla.

Finally, Joan gave them the brush off. It didn't take much because of their big egos. By then there were other girls at the bar for them to impress.

Mr. Oden was the first "Mammy Jammer" to get there. He brought a really nice Gretsch drum kit and it took him forever to carry all the pieces inside and set them up on stage. Some guys from Writing 121 offered to help, but he politely declined. I guess he figured it could be construed as a bribe.

Once Mr. Oden got his drums in place, he didn't bang on them and show off like most drummers. A few light taps here and there, and he was good to go. After that, he sat at the bar and drank by himself.

I took the opportunity to walk over and say something. He didn't recognize me, but when I mentioned 121, he perked right up. He looked quite a bit different outside of class: a more stylish pair of glasses, a tank top that showed off his arms. He must work out, because he's got fairly wide shoulders despite a spare tire around the middle. Not bad for a guy in his 30's. I could tell that he didn't want to talk about his day job, so I asked him about Mammy Jammer: How long had they been together, stuff like that. He seemed preoccupied. Stage fright, probably. Then the singer got there and he had to go consult with her. She wasn't dressed up or anything. Just a T-shirt and jeans. How lame. I mean, if I were playing Dante's, I would have put a little more effort into my outfit. That's the one time looks are important; as a rock star, it's part of the job description.

Mammy Jammer went on late, about eleven. Usually the warm-up band goes on earlier. I have to admit, they were pretty good. A hell of a lot better than Saving Ophelia ending up being later on. Mammy Jammer had lots of cool synth samples. I was wrong about them having three keyboardists—they only have two. The other guy plays guitar with a million effects pedals, which is practically the same thing, at least if you're listening and not watching.

Mr. Oden played with a lot of feeling, especially in the slow parts. It was

cool how he rocked along with a drum machine most of the time. A lot of drummers are afraid to use click tracks and machines because it gives away their bad time. Not so with Oden; he nailed down those beats and hit plenty of loud cymbal crashes.

The singer didn't talk between songs. Ruth thought she was stuck up, but I think she's just shy. Her voice was a little on the weak side. It was obvious she'd never had any formal training; she had to work twice as hard to get the notes out, but they were always right on key, with a fairly strong accent—Danish maybe, or Dutch.

That picture in the *Mercury* didn't really do her justice: she's much more striking in person. Very petite and delicate. I don't think she looks like Calista Flockheart at all. In a few of the songs, her voice reminded me of a cross between Portishead and the Cocteau Twins. I think maybe she doesn't speak English too well and that's why she didn't acknowledge the audience. Plus she seemed kind of depressed.

ENTRY NINE

OK, here's the deal with Jeff: I love him, but he's got a few issues that I'd rather not deal with at the present time. We've been dating since my first term at PCC. At first, I was attracted to his personality; his looks grew on me later. That's a polite way of saying he's not the most handsome man on the planet.

But he's not ugly, either. He's probably a good fifty pounds overweight, but it doesn't really show since he's over six feet tall. Like the saying goes: "he carries it well." He's also very sweet when he wants to be, and he's got amazingly clear skin with blushing cheeks and the cutest little boy dimples that make you want to reach out and pinch them when he grins.

Jeff comes from a small town on the coast (Coos Bay) where he played football in high school. He also lost a parent (his mom) recently. So we've been a great comfort and a support to each other in that regard. It formed this amazing bond that made us both stronger.

I guess the biggest gripe I have about Jeff is his lack of ambition. He doesn't know yet what he wants from life. And that's kind of a turn-off because it means he's got an excuse to bomb out. Take school, for instance: He could get straight A's but he's never gotten anything higher than a B in any of his classes. Mostly he gets C's.

And he doesn't try very hard in his jobs, either. I think he must have had

around four or five in the year-and-a-half we've been dating. Usually, he ends up getting fired because of personality conflicts with his boss.

Right now, Jeff's working as a fry cook at McMenamins under The Crystal in downtown Portland. I call it "McMinimals" even though it's technically named Ringlers. That really pisses Jeffrey off because he says he's finally found an organization that cares about its employees. Yeah, right. As if. He just likes to work there because they give him free beers after work.

Jeff called me up yesterday and we went out for brunch. I was kind of surprised because I thought he'd have a raging hangover from the night before. It turned out he did go to see Dee-Dee Ramone at the Satyricon. And *yes*, it had been the best show of his whole life.

I didn't know whether or not to believe him because he would have said that even if it sucked just to make me wish I'd gone. After he went on and on about it, though, I could tell it really was an exceptional show, not just a ruse to make me feel bad. I sat there almost wishing I'd broken down and gone, even after Jeff had dissed me so bad on the phone. I could have showed up with Ruth and ignored him for a while until he got drunk and apologized.

He said the crowd was just like the old days when the Ramones ruled. I didn't contradict him, but I couldn't help smirking inwardly because how the hell would he know? Dee-Dee Ramone is practically old enough to be his father! Jeff wasn't even born yet when the Ramones cut their first album (back when everyone bought vinyl—not CD's or cassettes).

I let Jeffrey go on and on about the show, how there were all these fights, how he broke one of them up right on the dance floor and how Dee-Dee was spitting on the crowd and they were spitting back, how it was kind of surprising that Dee-Dee didn't say a word about Joey, but that was probably because everything that could be said had already been said; you can't mourn forever, especially if you're the last Ramone on earth who can still rock the house.

After brunch, we rode bikes over to Jeff's new pad. It's kind of a weird set-up down on Water Street by the Ross Island Bridge, freeway on-ramps and off-ramps all around it, hundreds of feet up in the air, dwarfing what might otherwise be a rather agreeable three-story house. From the kitchen, it almost feels like you're a troll living under a bridge in your own little troll cottage waiting for some unsuspecting person to come along that you can catch and boil in a pot for dinner.

The landlord is fairly cool, as far as landlords go. He owns everything on the block and he calls Jeff's house the "pumpkin" house because it's painted a pumpkin shade of orange. Despite the fact that he's a yuppie from the tip of his nose down to his Birkenstock-clad toes, he responds quickly if something breaks and generally acts polite and respectful. He's also got the house fixed up pretty nice considering.

The backyard opens onto a deep grassy ravine, and there's an old May pole down there from the hippies who used to live on the block way back in the 70's when all the houses were falling-down shacks. Jeff told me they used to have Moonlight Madness parties where they'd get drunk on dandelion wine and dance naked around the May pole. He vowed to carry on the tradition, but May is already half over and I know he won't get around to throwing a party for another couple of months.

Since none of Jeff's other roommates were there, we had the place to ourselves. After we talked for a while and drank coffee on the deck overlooking the ravine, we went up into Jeff's new room and made love. It was OK. We went through all the right motions (and positions) but the old tenderness just wasn't there. Part way through, I started wondering if maybe Jeff has been cheating on me. He tried a kinky move that I seriously doubt he could have thought up on his own.

Maybe I'm just paranoid now that he's working at a popular bar. Especially with all the free beers and late night barflies drifting down from Crystal Ballroom on the weekends.

Afterwards, instead of taking his customary bong hit, Jeff went over to the big chair by the window. He stared, grinning his boyish grin. "Hey, Jules: why don't you stand in front of the mirror and pose for me?"

When I did, he said I looked the best he's ever seen me. How much weight had I lost? I told him I didn't have a scale. He said he'd buy me one. In the meantime, I'd better watch out. Another five pounds and I would be too skinny; most of the weight so far had come off my boobs and ass. Pretty soon there'd be nothing left to grab.

We had a pillow fight over that one.

Later, I started thinking about what Jeff had said. Me too skinny? It didn't seem possible. I'd lost a few pounds, so what? Plenty of girls on campus were skinnier than me. *Way*. And they probably starve themselves. You'd never catch me throwing up in the bathroom. "Ewe, like, *ohmygod!* Gag me with a spoon!" Not this chick. I'm still a corn-fed dame at heart. So

what if I woke up one morning to discover that I'd become a clotheshorse? These things happen when you loose your baby fat.

Which reminds me, I've got to call Ruth. She promised to go shopping this week and help me pick out some new outfits. We'll hit all the best thrift stores in Southeast, then we'll have dinner at the Old Wive's Tale. I hear they've got a new salad bar that's to die for.

ENTRY TEN

After class today, I asked Mr. Oden about Ruth's short story. He said the school paper wasn't the right periodical to send it to. PCC has a special journal that's published twice a year called *The Alchemy*. But it probably wouldn't be such a good idea to submit another writer's story without her permission, even if she was your best friend.

Somehow the conversation got switched to Oden's rock band. How were things going? He said that Helena (the singer) had to fly back to Belgium for a family emergency. The band was dead in the water until she got back.

Jokingly, I mentioned that I sing and play guitar, I could fill in for her in the meantime. Mr. Oden didn't laugh. Instead, he asked if I had a demo tape. Can you believe it! *Holymama!* I almost died.

Mr. Oden walked me out to my car where I had a few extra tapes in the glove box. I was so nervous that my legs were shaking the whole way.