

Journal

June 1991

Leslie sat watching her bus drive up. She got up and walked through the double doors of the college and into the open air. She ran her hand through her short brown hair. She walked onto the bus. Hello, Leslie," Mary said.

"Hi," she flashed her card to the bus driver. She nearly walked down to the end of the bus. She took a seat. A second later a man walked onto the bus. She looked at him. He wore a white button down shirt, kaki pants and black doc martins. He took the seat in front facing her. He listened to his music on his headphones. The bus started moving. She continued glancing at him every once and a while. She thought he was attractive. He was not exactly handsome. He had thick, short brown hair. He wore a pair of thin-framed glasses. The bus pulled up to the Jefferson School. She decided she would speak to him. She asked him, "What are you listening to? He looked at her.

"Squirrel Nut Zippers." He had blue eyes.

"What's your name?"

"Jake."

"I'm Leslie," she smiled.

May 1992

Jake brushed his hand down her shoulder carelessly. She flinched. He moved away and pressed his lips hard against her mouth. He slid his tongue deep inside and moved it around. Leslie tasted his cigarettes. Trying to imitate his kissing she failed and gave in kissing in her own style. She felt sparks of warmth run down her body. He jerked his head away. "I taught you to kiss better than that." She felt cold down the small of her back.

"What was wrong with the kiss?"

She quickly pulled on her underwear and hooked her bra and slid underneath the covers. Leslie pulled close to feel Jake's warm back. She brushed her fingertips along his spine. "Stop!" He moved away. She dropped her hand and rolled over.

Leslie lay watching Jake's face. How his one eye is slightly cracked open even when asleep. It made it hard to decipher if he was really sleeping. His pupil moved rapidly in dream. She traced the scar on his face with her eyes.

"I am going out to smoke." Jake got up and pulled on his pants and grabbed a shirt and pulled it over his head. He slid on his shoes. Leslie stirred.

"What time is it?"

He looked at his watch. "Ten."

She rolled over. "I'll come with you." She got up pulled on her skirt and blouse. She slid on her sandals. Following him through his bedroom door and out through the kitchen she asked, "Jake what was Jenifer like?"

"She was a bitch." She followed him out the sliding glass door.

Jake sat across from her exhaling a puff of smoke into the air. The porch light cast a garish color to his face. He poised his cigarette in mid air and squinted his eyes. "You're faaat." He drug out the word for emphasis. She brought up her shoulders.

Leslie sat up on the king-sized bed her back on the wall. Her eyes were intently reading the book in front of her. Bright sunlight washed through the window. The room was hot. She felt damp sweat on her back. Jake walked up beside the bed and crawled next to her. He looked her in the eyes. "I could love you."

July 1992

Leslie dialed Jake's number. Waited a moment.

"Hello."

"Hi, it's me."

"I know."

She sighed, "How are you?"

"I'm peachy, happy 4th of July, happy Independence Day," he said brightly.

She smiled, "I'm going to watch fireworks tonight."

"High school stuff, he said.

She frowned, "It's not high school stuff. I met a guy at work. His name is Luke. He is loving and kind."

"Everything I am not?"

"Yeah."

"What are you doing tonight?" she asked.

"Going to see a friend," he replied.

"Do you remember calling me fat?"

"I never called you fat."

"Yes you did."

"I never fucking called you fat, later." Leslie heard the phone hang up. She hung up the phone.