

OH WELL, WHATEVER NEVERMIND



A NOVEL

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Oh Well, Whatever, Nevermind.
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*This is a work of fiction.
Any resemblance between characters portrayed within
and actual people, past or present
is purely the drugs, man.*

In Memoriam

Ruth Taylor

1961 – 2006

An amazing fucking teacher

An incredible poet

January → May, 1991

Sophie Rosaire: Folkies In The Oval

In January 'ninety-one, I was into my third semester at John Abbott. Technically I shoulda been almost done the two-year pre-university program, but I'd skipped, dropped and flunked so many classes that I was still in it for a while. I think the main reason I was taking so much time to get outta college was that it was so much fun at John Abbott, you know? Especially hanging out at the Oval Coffee House. The Oval was this ugly little hole in the wall and the only place on campus where you could smoke indoors. The Oval was Abbott's dirty little secret, dumped in the corner of the basement of the Hertzberg Building. Its white stucco walls were stained gray with the secondhand smoke of a few million cigarettes; it had low, dirty ceilings with pipes and wires and ducts everywhere. There were too many tables and not enough chairs and when it was really crowded? You didn't even need to have a cigarette because of all the smoke. The people that hung out there tended to be freaks, druggies, punks, skaters--the misfits of society basically; I was a regular at the Oval.

So anyway it was about two weeks into the winter semester and me and Heather were sitting at a table smoking, playing Rummy and killing time. We were both on three hour breaks between classes, which sounds cool but it sucks; by the time your break's over you don't want to go back to class. Anyway, even though its winter Heather's got her skateboard and her foot is planted right on the rack, rolling it back and forth while

I'm playing out my hand. She wasn't doing it to be annoying or anything; Heather's just really into skateboarding and wanted to be outside, rolling across the pavement. Too bad it was snowing. Heather's the original skater punk: Ramones T-shirt, purple Mohawk with yellow tips, black army pants that are faded and patched all over and a well-worn pair of cherry Docs, fourteen holes and crazy-laced. When she wears her hair down and combed over to one side, like today, Heather really looks sexy. Anyway, I finished playing my hand but I was stuck with one card.

"Aw, fuck!"

"Too bad for yoo-oo!" Heather chanted as I lit a smoke. Heather put down every card she had. I'd even helped her: the seven-eight-nine of spades I'd played let her add a ten-Jack of spades to the set. Keeping score I was still mainly ahead of Heather, but she's not what I'd call a good winner, which *can* be annoying. Staring at me with her eyes wide and her mouth open, she starts putting down her cards one by one, making an "Oh!" noise as she did. As she finished, this really loud blast of feedback came out of the Oval's sound system and me and Heather turned to look at the stage.

The tables and chairs in the Oval are between the coffee bar and the stage. The fat guy from Student Services was standing at the microphone while some tall, skinny ex-Hippie type standing next to him was unpacking an acoustic guitar, a tambourine and a harmonica.

"Oh, great," Heather growled, "Another folk singer comes to the Oval."

“Can I have everyone’s attention, please?” the Fat Guy from Student Services said. He repeated himself a couple more times before everyone, well, almost everyone, had stopped talking.

“While you guys are down here swilling coffee and poisoning your lungs, we thought you might like some entertainment.”

Suddenly Fat Guy’s face went angry and he started looking around. Apparently not everybody was paying attention. Some longhaired guy in a blue gaucho was talking with a fat girl a couple of tables over from me and Heather. Don’t take me calling her fat the wrong way: I’m heavy, okay? I’m a good way overweight; the guys I sleep with (and some of the girls) tell me I’m voluptuous, but everybody, like, mispronounces that word “volumptuous” for some stupid reason. But I just want you to understand what this girl looked like. She was actually kinda cute though not my type. The fat girl with the guy in the blue gaucho, I mean. Something about the way the guy and the girl were talking said they were just friends, nothing more. Their body language was too comfortable, or something. My psych teacher could probably tell you better. Anyway, something else about them seemed to have pissed off the Fat Guy from Student Services. Maybe because they were talking a little loud (A little loud is how everyone talks in the Oval, though), or maybe because they were totally ignoring Fat Guy. Anyway, Fat Guy grabbed the mic.

“Hey!” he bellowed, making like, everyone stare at him and who he was looking at.

“You know,” Fat Guy shouted, “We go to the trouble of bringing someone here to play for you, and the least we expect is that you pay some goddamn attention!” The guy

in the blue gaucho stared at Fat Guy for a long minute, lit up a cigarette and then turned back to the girl he was talking to.

“So, *anyway*,” he said loudly, “As I was saying...” and he just goes back to talking. The girl he’s with starts laughing and so do some other people, including me and Heather. We had a few run-ins with Fat Guy last semester and seeing him put in his place like that was just so sweet.



Heather and I had been trying to set up a campus animal/environmental rights group. We’d gotten all the necessary permissions and forms but every time we tried to book a room or the Agora for a meeting or a recruitment drive, all of a sudden we’d get problems from Fat Guy over in Student Services. Our room would be double booked or the Agora would be off-limits for something...the usual bullshit. Finally we had to get SUJAC, the student union and Bandersnatch, John Abbott’s newspaper involved. So this guy right now in the Oval, blowing Fat Guy off was just beautiful. Fat Guy wasn’t taking his shit though. His face was turning red under his blonde hair either from being pissed off or being humiliated, one of the two. I don’t know which--but it was fun to watch.

“You know, if you don’t want to be here, you can leave!”

“But I *want* to stay!” Blue Gaucho said, “I just don’t want to listen to some lousy folksinger. I came here to have a coffee and a cigarette. You’re the one trying to force this guy down my throat.”

Heather and I were laughing like crazy, watching Fat Guy open and close his mouth. Finally he bellows: “Either shut the hell up, or leave right now!” with all the authority of an angry administrator. But it was too late. When he lost his temper with

Blue Gaucho who'd stayed calm and cool, Fat Guy lost all power. Our man in blue turned back to the girl he was sitting with and continued talking, in quieter tones. Fat Guy introduced the folk singer and stormed out, angry and humiliated. The folk singer just stepped up to the mic, he was totally nervous at this point. I don't think he was expecting that kind of opening act.

"Well...that wasn't quite the introduction I was hoping for," the folkie said, looking around the room. He was tall and thin, too bald on top for the long hair left on his head.

"I'm from Vermont...a little town called Woodstock..." He started this pointless story about how he'd been stopped at the border that morning and when he'd told the border patrol where he was from (Woodstock) and what he did for a living (folksinger), they made him get out of the car so they could search it. I got the impression that this guy tells this story a lot to try and warm up to an audience. I also got the impression it might have worked if that little scene between the Fat Guy from Student Services and the Guy in the Blue Gaucho hadn't happened. The folksinger started into *Mellow Yellow* and Heather and I shared a look. We put away our cards, dumping our stuff into our bags. She kicked her skateboard into her hand and we started to go. The guy in the blue gaucho was still talking to his friend. For some reason as Heather and I walked past I stopped at their table.

"Hi," I said, "Listen: I just wanted to tell you that I loved the way you handled that Student Services guy."

He smiled. He had these deep brown eyes that just seemed to lock on you.

“Thanks,” He said, “I’m Will,” he stuck out his hand, “Edwards.” I shook his hand.

“I’m Sophie,” I said.

“I know,” Will said, “We have a class together.”

“We do? Which one?”

“Human sexuality,”

“Cool!” I said, “We can sit together and make fun of the Police Tech students in there for an easy ride!”

“Cool,” Will said, “This is my friend, Krystal.”

I shook Krystal’s hand.

“This is my friend, Heather.” Will shook Heather’s hand and Heather and Krystal waved hello to each other. For the first time I looked down at their table and noticed that a bunch of tarot cards were spread out between Will and Krystal.

“Oh!” I said, “Were you getting your cards read?”

“No,” Krystal said, exhaling smoke, “I can’t read Will. I was teaching him how to read Tarot cards.”

“Sorry! I didn’t know we were interrupting.”

“Sure you did,” Krystal said, “But the whole thing with Eugene killed the vibe anyway.”

“Who’s Eugene?” Heather asked.

“The Fat Guy from Student Services. You didn’t know his name was Eugene?” Heather shook her head and smiled.

“No,” she said, “We always just call him Fat Guy.”

Krystal laughed. Onstage the fabulous fucking folk singer stopped playing and was unpacking another musical instrument.

“This is called a dulcimer,” He said, “It’s a wonderful, magical instrument...”

“Goddamn, I hate it when there’s folkies in the Oval.” Will said.

“Me and Heather were just leaving,” I told him, “You guys want to come with?”

“Where to?” Will asked.

“Why don’t we go book an AV room in the library and watch a movie?” Heather suggested, “We could smoke a joint?”

“How about *A Clockwork Orange*?” Krystal asked.

Heather’s eyes widened.

“I *love* that movie!” she said.

“I haven’t seen it yet,” Will said, “Sure.”

“We just have to pick up some weed,” I said, “Can you guys put in?”

“I have some hash,” Will told me, “We can do a salad.”

“Cool!” I said, “I knew I liked you!”

We left the Oval to head upstairs to the first floor and the library. Sometimes three-hour breaks with folkies in the Oval can really suck. And sometimes they can be pretty cool.

Will Edwards: Dennis Hopper Teaches My English Class

Students in the Quebec CEGEP (Post-High School, Pre-University) college system almost always aim, when registering for the next semester's classes, for the Ideal Class Schedule: one with Fridays off. This is especially true here at John Abbott College, in Sainte Anne De Bellevue.

Ste Anne's is a bedroom community on the western tip of the West Island of Montreal. It's home to the upper-middle class / lower-high class homeowner's income bracket as well as the lower-class apartment-and-flophouse-dwelling College student. As such, when you go down the main drag along Ste Anne's waterfront you'll find low-rent and high-end shops and boutiques, a repertory cinema, banks, dépanneurs, coffee shops, a pool hall and most importantly, bars. Ste Anne's is a college town and that means that it's number one industry is the sale of alcohol, followed closely by recreational narcotics sales, although that one doesn't show up on the Chambre De Commerce's annual report.

Because there are six different bars in easy walking distance from one another along the lakeshore, students over at Abbott almost always try to get Fridays off. That way the weekend's binge drinking can begin on Thursday night.

Unfortunately, this semester the creative writing class I needed to take was only available on Fridays. Well, actually it's a two-part class: an hour and a half on Wednesday mornings and on Friday mornings. This means that if I go out drinking on

Thursday night with my friends (who almost all have Fridays off), I'd have to go to class with a hangover on Friday morning. Believe it or not I don't usually go out on Thursday nights. But of course last night I did. David and Gertie both wanted to go out and while we were at the Pub we hooked up with Brian, Jeff and Julie and wound up making a night of it going from the Pub to the Brass to Annie's to the Quai Sera, closing the place down wasted off our asses at three in the morning.

Fortunately my 10 to 11:30 AM Advanced Creative Writing class is the only class I have to deal with Fridays. At the end of last semester I'd planned my schedule well, just not well enough. By the time my window for over-the-phone registration had opened the Tuesday and Thursday session for Dick Leary's Advanced Creative Writing course was booked.

Now I have to tell you Dick is a really cool teacher. He's brutally honest, cares about his students and most importantly the subject he teaches. Dick was direct enough to tell me when I took his Intro to Creative Writing course last January that my writing sucked. Then he told me why. Then he helped me get over all the bullshit I'd learned in high school. My writing's never been better and I owe it all to him. And it's not like I'm the only student he's ever helped out, either. Anyone in his class gets Dick's attention. As long as they're actually interested in listening to what he has to say.

Unfortunately Dick is also an ex-Hippie radical and even though he's got a lot of life experience, he can totally go off on you and start ranting and raving like some

deranged burnout. He can rant about anything and you can almost never tell what's going to set him off. When Dick gets like that he kinda reminds me of the Incredible Hulk. Just like mild-mannered scientist Bruce Banner can suddenly turn into the Hulk, Dick Leary can also suddenly turn into Dennis Hopper. You know who I mean: that drug culture movie star from the sixties and seventies: he's been in *Easy Rider*, *The Trip*, *The Last Movie*, *Apocalypse Now*...last year he was in *Flashback* with Kiefer Sutherland. He was also in a bunch of Westerns that my dad collects. My dad's a big Dennis Hopper fan, so I guess that's where I picked up on it.

Anyway, I remember when I first discovered Dick's manifest ability to transform into Dennis Hopper. Last January during my first semester of CEGEP I took his Intro class. We all filed in, most of us new to CEGEP, still a little in awe of the big (compared to high school) campus, teachers who let us use their first names and who treated you (for the most part) like adults. Some teachers even swore and let you swear in class, too!

So here we all were, coming into Professor Richard Leary's Intro to Creative Writing course for the first time, taking our seats in this cramped little brick-walled room in the Pennfield Annex. Reclined in the chair at the desk in the front of the classroom was our teacher, wearing a white T-shirt, a black leather vest, brown corduroys and—in January, mind you—a pair of sandals. These last were noticeable only because his feet were propped up on the desk. Professor Leary was sound asleep, his hairy, tattooed arms folded across his chest.

We all sat like that until about five minutes after class was scheduled to begin. Then the alarm on Dick's watch went off and our teacher woke up. Only instead of Richard Leary, we were face-to-face with Dennis Hopper.

"Man!" he said, "So...you guys all wanna be writers. Wow. And at least ten of you are here because someone else told you that I was a fuckin' flake and you could get an easy hundred-per-cent grade."

Dennis Hopper shrugged and gave us all the once-over.

"Sure," he said, "Any one of you only have to come to my class once more and I'll guarantee you a fuckin' hundred-per-cent! All you have to do is let me chain you naked overnight to that big tree outside Penfield and feed you two hits of acid. You write about whatever fuckin' happens next and bring the composition to the next class."

Another time last year Dennis Hopper came forth when a girl, reading some material Dick had handed out to us, mispronounced the word "apostrophe". Instead of saying it "Ah-po-stro-fee" she pronounced it the way it's said in French, "Ah-po-stro-ff".

"Say that again?" Dick asked, innocently.

"Umm...Apostrophe?" the girl, Kelly I think her name was, said.

Dick smiled and shook his head. Dennis Hopper began to emerge.

"No," Dennis Hopper said, "You're supposed to pronounce it 'ah-po-stro-fee', not 'ah-po-stro-ff'. That sounds like some kinda flaky fuckin' French pastry. The kind you'd get down at that bakery place in Sainte Anne's. *Apostroff!* Man, I can practically taste one of those...it'd probably have like a lemon cream filling and chocolate on top. You oughtta go get some of those apostroffs for us. I bet they'd be curved, but only on one

side. I tell you what Kelly, if you can get a bakery or, like, a pastry shop to make me up a batch of apostroffs I'll give you a hundred per cent in this class. Hell, bring me the recipe and I'll get my girlfriend to make them for me!"

"Umm...okay," Kelly said half-embarrassed, half-amused.

"Man, an apostroff," Dennis Hopper exclaimed, "I bet you'd want to eat one with one of those fancy foamy Italian coffees, smoke a cigarette and sit outside on the terrace. What'll you have? I'll have a cappuccino and gimme an apostroff, please!"



And this morning as I staggered into Dick's class on the first floor of the Pennfield Annex...I don't know...something told me that we'd get a visit from Dennis Hopper. Maybe it would be over an Akira Kurosawa movie they'd shown on PBS last night, or something in the news. Maybe Dennis Hopper would appear because of the snowstorm raging outside, or because the Mulroney government's cigarette taxes had boosted smokes to nearly eight bucks a pack. Whatever it was, I got the sense as I came into class after my morning coffee and cigarette in the Oval that Dennis Hopper would be teaching class that day.

As I sat down the seat to the left of my usual place was vacant, which meant that David Astrid, my friend and one of last night's drinking partners hadn't pulled his hung-over ass out of bed this morning. I pulled out my writing pad and got settled, lonely for Dave's company in the misery of my hangover.

"Any of you read the paper this morning?" Dick asked, as the last stragglers came into class, "I mean, besides your horoscopes or the funny pages."

And the transformation from Dick Leary into Dennis Hopper began.

“All this shit goin’ on in Kuwait right now? Operation Desert Storm? Fuck, since when does the US give a damn about the Middle East? Bush was calling this a goddamn internal matter for Iraq to settle until someone told him there was oil in Kuwait! Now he’s started attacking Iraq. Watch out, man: Mulroney’s made Canada into America’s lapdog ever since he started this Free Trade bullshit! And he lied about that, too! Mulroney was in opposition when Trudeau was in charge and he said there’d never fuckin’ be Free Trade. Yeah, my ass! You can’t believe a word that comes out of that sonofabitch’s mouth: he’ll have Canadian troops on the front lines as a human shield for his American buddies’ soldiers soon enough! Man, this same shit happened thirty fuckin’ years ago when LBJ sent American ‘advisors’ into Viet Nam. Jesus! Bush is Ronnie Ray-Gun’s protégé! I have nightmares whenever I hear that bastard talk about a New World Order. He’s shooting bombs at targets in Iraq, and the fuckin’ things keep missing! At least that’s what CNN wants us to believe. Come on! The mightiest superpower on Earth, with the most advanced weaponry on the planet and you’re going to tell me the targeting computers on these bombs don’t work right? This war’s about blood for oil and the payback’s gonna be even more blood! Does anyone really think that Arab terrorists aren’t gonna strike back? Does Canada really need to be a target?”

He looked around at our tired, apathetic Friday morning faces.

“What the fuck is wrong with you kids?” Dennis Hopper bellowed, “Don’t you guys give a damn about what’s going on over there? American bombs are killing Iraqi children! You don’t give a damn that oilfields are on fire, polluting the air we breathe and that innocent people are dying over there over the price per liter of gasoline?”

This went on for quite some time. Dennis Hopper continued berating us, telling us how his generation, our parents' generation, the wonderful Baby Boomers had done so much to make the world a better place and how spoiled we all were, how apathetic we were. Dennis Hopper's tirade lasted most of the class. We had been supposed to read and peer-critique four compositions that morning, but Dennis Hopper only transformed back into Dick Leary twenty minutes before class ended. He gave a violent, dismissive wave of his hand and barked:

"Go on! Get the fuck outta here, and try and make this goddamn world a better place!" And then as suddenly as he came Dennis Hopper was gone and Dick Leary had returned.

"Well, I guess we're out outta time," Dick said. "So next Wednesday we'll pick up where we left off with the peer evaluation of Jessica, Sharon, Dennis and Charlie's stories. Have a great weekend, guys!" And with that we filed from class and to freedom.



After class I was supposed to go over to Jeff McBride's place in Baie d'Urfe for a rehearsal jam, but before I left class I needed another coffee and another smoke. The Oval was practically deserted when I got there. Ed, the long-haired guy I bought acid from sometimes was tending bar, and Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits compilation was blasting from the sound system.

"You look like shit Will," Ed said, pouring me a cup of the sludge that they called coffee down here. I nodded as I paid and went to sit down by the door. I was waiting for

Gertie; though she didn't have class today, she had promised to meet me in the Oval and drive me over to Jeff's.

I sat having my cigarette and my coffee, thinking about Dick Leary/Dennis Hopper's rant. I couldn't get over how hypocritical he was being. Yeah when they were kids the baby boomers—aka the Hippies—had protested Viet Nam and Big Corporations and they lived on communes and dropped acid and smoked grass. But then when they got out of school, almost all of them took jobs with or started their own Big Corporations, created the ninety-hour workweek, popularized disco, Abba records and the Bee Gees and became the coke-snorting, social-climbing status-conscious Yuppies of the 1980s. The Hippies, who had been so opposed to capitalism, so against war, pollution and poverty had elected Ronald Reagan to the White House and Brian Mulroney to Parliament and were running IBM, GM, Microsoft, GE and the military-industrial complex. The generation that founded Greenpeace and the Peace Corps was ruining the planet with CFCs, PCB's, deforestation and acid rain.

The Boomers like to talk about how we, their children, have it so good and how little we seem to care about anything. How are we supposed to give a damn with the example they've set for us? The generation that was supposed to change the world wound up selling it to the highest bidder. Right now, unemployment among my generation, labeled by Baby Boomer spin doctors as Generation-X, is insane, because instead of retiring and opening up more entry-level positions the Boomers were hanging onto their jobs, leaving 20 year-old college graduates to work at McDonalds or gas

stations or dépanneurs across the land. Worse, the Boomers have had so few kids that when they retire we're goanna be stuck paying into a government pension fund that probably won't even support them before it goes completely bankrupt. We'll most likely never benefit from a single dollar we pay into our government pension plan. The Baby Boomers like to claim they made the world a better place and I suppose they did: they made it a better place for themselves.



I spent an hour waiting for Gertie in a hangover daze before realizing that she wasn't there. I left the Oval for the payphones. Traveling down the hall and up a ramp, I was in the basement of the Casgrain Sports Centre. I bought a chocolate bar from the vending machine and then called Gertie's place in nearby Pincourt. She wasn't home; her mother answered Gertie's phone and told me that she'd gone over to a friend's house last night after we all went clubbing. I was stuck for a ride to Jeff's place because Mrs. Schwartz didn't know whose house Gertie had gone over to. Gertie has a lot of friends, but I don't know who she'd have gone to see at four-thirty in the morning—the time we got back to her house for.

I made my way outside and through the blizzard to the number 200 bus stop on Lakeshore Road. The snow was already ankle deep and blowing hard enough that I couldn't even see more than ten feet. I waited in the driving cold and snow until finally the bus rolled up. It was nearly deserted on the bus as I took a seat in the back for the ride to Jeff's house.

Like most of us, Jeff still lived with his parents. They lived in a nice, trendy upper-class Baie d'Urfe neighborhood with plaster columns over the door to his house, big bay windows in the living room and white brick with black mortar. Jeff's an only child and takes full advantage of his parents' undivided love and generosity. When Jeff started developing an interest in music, not only did his parents buy him a bass and an amp and pay for music lessons, they also had part of the basement converted into a rehearsal studio, later equipped for recording.

Jeff's parents were of course at work when I arrived. Jeff let me in and we headed downstairs. The smell of hash hit me as we got to the basement. I'd known Jeff now for a few months. He'd been putting together a band, heard me sing and asked me to join. Now me I want to make movies, I want to write, direct, but fame is fame and art is art, so I decided to take Jeff up on his offer and join his band.



It was late fall and on Saturday nights the Brass had karaoke. I went with Gertie, and for the hell of it I ended up doing two songs: Credence Clearwater Revival's *Bad Moon Rising* and Guns N' Roses *Sweet Child O' Mine*. I admit, I was trying to impress Gertie; she and I have been hanging out for about a year now and I want to go out with her. Anyway I nailed my two songs and while I was sharing a pitcher of beer with Gertie, Jeff came over and introduced himself. I auditioned the next day and Jeff made me the front man for his band. He played bass; his girlfriend Julie Kennedy was on drums and Pascal Lebrun was our lead guitar.

Jane's Addiction was blasting from Jeff's stereo as I got out of my coat and Docs. Everyone was there, including, to my surprise, Sophie, the dark-haired, blue-eyed girl I'd met in the Oval the day before and her Punk friend, Heather.

"Will!" Sophie called.

"Hey!" I called back.

Jeff and Pascal's friend Sylvain was there. He was firing up a bong full of hash and passed it to me after taking his hits. After my class with the ranting, raving Dennis Hopper and Gertie no-showing, the bong hits were more than welcome. Julie kissed me hello as she took the bong. I sat down with Sophie, Heather and Pascal.

"So how do you know Jeff?" I asked.

"I'm actually Pascal's friend," Sophie said, "When I came up for school from Quebec City, he's one of the first people I hooked up with."

"Cool," I said, noticing the appreciation that seemed to pass over Pascal's face. Pascal's a great guy. He's one of the nicest guys I've ever met. Totally down to earth, totally with it. Everything makes him happy. It was obvious to me that he at least sorta liked Sophie. And who could blame him? She's sexy and curvy and that jet-black hair of hers with the pale skin and dark blue eyes...Sophie's fucking hot. I stole a look up her skirt when I thought nobody was looking. She was wearing black tights and no panties. I could feel myself getting hard and knew I'd be looking a couple more times and probably masturbating when I got home.

We smoked and talked a bit while Jeff and Julie set up the recording studio for our jam. It was always fun to record and then listen to ourselves even if we were months

away from doing a decent demo tape. The playback helped us go over what we needed to work on, like my falsetto and Pascal's chord combinations and Jeff's problem keeping the rhythm with Julie's drumming. That one was our big joke. Jeff and Julie were a couple that couldn't stay in sync. Jeff was also sniffing around a couple of clubs on the West Island, he told us, trying to get us a gig. It was a slow process, but still we were all starting to come together as a band and things could only get better. Sure we might not ever get anywhere, but these were fun times, our times. And we were all having a blast. It helped me take my mind offa Gertie not being there, and I got to hang out with Sophie in between jamming. It's always great to have people around when you're playing. It helps you to, like, relate to an audience. Since I've been part of Jeff's band, I gotta say that this is some of the most fun I've ever had.

Pascal Lebrun: She Walks In Beauty Like The Night

I like to read a lot of books. Philosophy...poetry...history...science...anything I can. I read stuff like Stephen King and Tom Clancy, and Robert Ludlum too...I'm not a snob. But some things I read I remember always, like the Jim Morrison biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, or Lord Byron's poem *She Walks In Beauty Like The Night*. I read that in high school, in English class. But the first time I met Sophie, I heard in my head that poem.

I went to high school in Ville D'Anjou, in French. My English is not the best, but when I wanted to go to CEGEP I wanted to go in English. Why? I want to learn the arts. Oh, there are excellent French CEGEPs for the arts, but I find that the people in those schools being very elitist, very much snobs when they get into those programs. If you go to the Plateau Mont Royal you see what I mean. It's those kind of person in the French CEGEPS—always pretending to be so great and creative. I just want to be with normal people who like the same things I do, you know?

Anyway, Sophie and I had known each other since before we met, because, in my *secondaire trois*, my third year of high school, my French teacher made our class do correspondence with a high school in Quebec City. Sophie and I got each other's names, I guess and we began a correspondence. It went out of class too, because we started calling each other sometimes on the phone. We sent each other pictures, like when I grew my hair long, when she got her arm tattooed and when we graduated.

I had decided to go to John Abbott College because of its film, television, arts and music programs. Sophie's father was from Montreal and wanted her to see the city, and Sophie wanted to go to an English CEGEP also, so it was natural that we go together at John Abbott.

Sophie and me are friends who can tell anything to each other. Like what an asshole I think my brother Michel is; like her affair with the gym teacher in her last year of high school; how my high school girlfriend broke up with me and went skinhead; how hard it was for her when her grandmother died. So when Sophie came to Montreal for the first time to find a place to live for September 1989, I was looking forward to get to finally meet her.

Sophie came into Montreal in July of '89. She was only starting CEGEP in January but she wanted to learn the city and work until then. I was to show her around, help her find a place. I knew what she looked like from her pictures and so at the bus station at Berri downtown, I waited for her in the terminus.

When she got off the bus, Sophie was in a black T-shirt, black safari shorts and hiking boots. I'll never forget what she looked like. Sophie's not thin and she's not fat: she is like a Renaissance-painting woman. When Sophie saw me and smiled at me I felt it from my face to my balls...I don't mean that to sound vulgar. She came into the station, running to me. That's when I heard it in my head, the poem.

She walks in beauty like the night

*She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and in her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

“Pascal!” she called. “Comment ca va?” She dropped her bags and ran to hug me, and kiss my cheeks. Her shirt went up in the back when I hugged her and my hands touched her skin. When I think about that, I still remember how she felt under my hands. Maybe it was the rebound from Manon leaving me to become a skinhead, so I tried not to notice how she was making me feel. Sophie is my friend! I can't mess that up with feeling in love with her. This is just the rebound. At least, that's what I was telling myself.

I've dated some girls since Sophie moved to Montreal but nothing was serious. And when I was with them, I kept thinking of Sophie. Last summer, I took a vacation to Gaspé for a month, just to get away and see if my feelings would change. They didn't, and every night I kept dreaming of her.

*One shade more, one ray less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.*

Sophie goes out with lots of guys. She just wants to have fun, she says, and she doesn't want a relationship. Whenever someone she's with gets serious, she breaks up with him. I don't want to lose her because she won't go out with me, so I keep quiet...because I

love her. If I can't be with her, I want to be her friend. I admit, it is sometimes difficult and I get depressed sometimes when she's seeing someone new, but I go on with my life, you know? Like, during last week. Me and Sophie got some pot and decided to skip our classes and go back to her place. She rents a bedroom in this small old house in Sainte Anne's. She shares with three other girls the house; they have a living room and a kitchen and a bathroom upstairs and downstairs. Sophie's room is downstairs, between the living room and kitchen. It's a nice little room, and even though nobody was home and we had the whole house, we went to sit in her room to listen to music. We had just finished smoking up and we put on a Jimi Hendrix tape. Sophie sat on the floor against the bed and I leaned my head over the side and we shared one of my cigarettes. We sat there just listening to music and then the song *Little Wing* played.

"Hmm," Sophie said.

"What?"

"This song," she said, "Last Friday me and Sylvain came back here when we left Jeff's we were listening to this tape. God, we were still so fucking stoned, you know?"

"Yeah," I said, smiling, because right then I was also so fucking stoned.

"Well I was lying on the bed and he was on the floor, sitting, you know?" Sophie said, "And we smoked another joint...and then I was resting my feet on his shoulders and he started rubbing them, you know? Anyway when *Little Wing* came on he'd turned around and was rubbing my legs all the way up and down and my skirt got pushed up over my tummy and then he pushed my legs apart and started kissing my pussy over my tights."

"Oh," I said. My face and ears were very warm and my stomach was very cold as she told to me this story.

"Yeah," she said, "He just ripped my tights off and started eating me me. Then he picked me up and flipped me over and just started fucking me. It was wild."

Sophie took a haul from my cigarette, smiling at her memory.

"I love this song, man," she said, "Wanna smoke another joint?"

"Yeah," I said, "So are you and Sylvain going out now?"

Sophie shook her head.

"No," she said, "We're just fooling around. You know me. I don't wanna have a boyfriend."

It's this kind of thing that hurts me. I love that Sophie trusts me so much she tells me everything. But I can't keep from feeling like my heart is broken when she does tell me these things. She just doesn't know how much it hurts me. Sylvain's my friend and after she told me this I couldn't stop thinking about him doing it to her and how much she liked it. And at the same time I wish I could have told her how I feel but I know what it would destroy our friendship if I did.

I wish that I could meet some girl who will make me forget how much that I love Sophie. Or maybe she and I will go out together someday and fall in love. I don't know. For now, I'm happy being her friend and being with her.

*And on that cheek, and o'er that brow
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!*

Maybe nothing will happen with me and Sophie. I don't know. Probably not.
But if there is a reason God brought her in my life, it was to make me a better person.
Even if she never loves me the way I love her, I already have so much because she is
there.

Julie Kennedy: La Nausée

So, when I wake up it's dark. The phone is ringing. That's what woke me. I can see the light on the phone flashing. Its screaming noise hurts my head. I try to wake Jeff up, but he's out cold. The green light from his alarm clock says that it's just a little past eight. I sit up and my stomach goes woozy. I fumble for the light, and turn it on. My eyes are stabbed through with the pain of the sudden light and my stomach rolls over.

"Oh Christ,"

After everyone left this afternoon, Jeff took me back upstairs to his room. We fooled around until it was nearly time for his parents to get home. Then, he wanted to get high. Jeff keeps a small stash of Horse that we dip into every now and again. We must have fallen asleep after we shot up because his works are still spread out on the table by the bed. The phone's still ringing, ringing, ringing and finally I find the strength to reach for it over Jeff's body and answer it. I take the time to light a cigarette before speaking.

"Hello?"

My throat hurts. My head hurts. I feel like I'm going to throw up. Thank God Jeff's parents didn't come up to say hi. Bad enough we're both naked, the sheets twisted up at the bottom of the bed, but Jeff's gear right out in the open? Not cool.

"Hey, Julie?"

It's Brian on the phone. I lean over to the side of the bed to pick up my T-shirt. A migraine goes off in my head like a bomb and my guts threaten to puke. I throw my shirt over Jeff's works.

“Hi Bri’,” I say, between puffs on the butt (the only thing keeping me from puking), “What’s up?”

So, I cradle the phone to my shoulder and rub my eyes. I feel like shit. A long drag of my smoke helps clear my head and settle my stomach a little better. I’ve got to lay off the Horse

“I thought we were all going to La Nausée tonight,” Brian says, “Gertie, Will and Dave are all over here already. Where are you guys?”

Jeff’s rolled over, and his eyes are half-open, and he’s staring up at the ceiling still a little strung out. So am I, I guess. I can smell my come and his and our combined sweat on his skin and mine. I feel sick, again.

“We’re still both here, Brian,” I tell him, “We’re just in bed.”

“Oh, fuck!” Brian says, alarmed, “I’m...I’m not...interrupting something, am I?”

“No. We finished screwing our brains out a couple of hours ago.”

“Oh,”

Bri’ doesn’t say much for a bit. Then, he asks:

“So are you guys still coming, tonight?”

I put the phone against my chest, and turn to Jeff.

“Everybody’s waiting to go to La Nausée. Jeff. Jeff! Everyone’s waiting for us. We’re all supposed to be going to La Nausée,” I tell him, “Are we still going?”

Jeff shakes his head.

“I just want to stay in and chill,” he says, “you go.”

“But I thought we were going to go out together tonight!”

And I'm upset about this because all week I've been looking forward to taking Jeff to La Nausée, and maybe even having a quickie with him in the bathroom.

"I can't," he says, "I'm too out of it."

He kisses my hand and looks up at me all dazed.

"You go," he says.

I hate it when Jeff's coming off smack; he never wants to do anything.

"Fine," I take the phone back, "Bri', Jeff's not coming, but I am. Did Sophie and Heather say if they were coming too?"

"Sophie's going to hang with Pascal and Sylvain," Brian told me, "But Heather said she's up for it."

"I'll give Heather a call to tell her I'm on my way once I've grabbed some food. Then we'll meet you guys at your place."

My sick stomach seems to be hungry, but I don't know how much food it can handle right now. I hang up the phone and get out of bed and start picking up all my clothes. I get on my bra and my plaid riding pants. I steal Jeff's *Sisters Of Mercy* T-shirt, and climb back onto bed to kiss him goodbye. I put my panties in his hand. He takes them and smiles, smelling me on them.

"That's so you think of me later tonight," I say, as I kiss him again.

My Docs are downstairs with my jacket, which means crossing paths with Jeff's parents, who, I'm sure, will know what we were up to. Well, at least the sex part.

Mister McBride mutters hello, flipping channels when I cross the living room to the front door.

“Hello, Julie,” Mrs. McBride says coldly as I pull on my boots and my MA-1 jacket. Outside it’s stopped snowing, but they still haven’t cleared the streets yet.

“Hi, Mrs. McBride,” I say, opening the door, “Bye, Mrs. McBride.”

I walk out and down the street to the Number 200 bus stop, which I ride down to St-Charles Road, and the McDonald’s for a late supper. Cheeseburger and a small fry go down great with a vanilla milkshake. I call Heather’s place from the payphones near the bathroom.

“Hey, Julie!” Heather says, “So, you comin’?”

“Yeah,” I say. Having eaten and smoked a few cigarettes I’m feeling a little more with it, “Are you taking your car, or do you want me to drive?”

“Are you sure you’re up to coming out?” Heather asks, “You don’t sound too hot.”

“No. Yeah. I’m fine,” I tell her, “I’m just a little...out of it.”

“Do you want me to drive, then?”

An offer I’m not willing to refuse.

“Yeah; it would take the pressure off, a little.”

“I’ll borrow my parent’s car, then. Where are you?”

I tell Heather where to find me and I go order a coffee. McDonald’s coffee isn’t exactly a gourmet blend but I was in serious need of some caffeine. I sat in the smoking section and waited for Heather. When she showed up, she practically caused a riot. Her Mohawk was full up, held firmly in place with a ton of Vaseline. The rest of her head was freshly shaved. Her eyeliner was black, her lipstick as well. Under her leather

trenchcoat, Heather was wearing her freshly-shined knee-high Doc Martens, black fishnet pantyhose, and a short, tattered plaid flannel skirt and a halter top (black, of course). She had a dozen rings in her ears and black lace gloves with the fingers cut off.

So, Heather walks up to me, and everyone is staring. I love how people react to anything strange or different. It's like anything outside the realm of their little West Island suburban experience must be a potential threat to their safety. Heather and I have had this conversation before. About how our Punk appearance reflects society's own bigotries and ugliness back at itself; about how if we can't expand people's minds, we should completely blow their minds instead. The sides of my head are shaved, but when I wear my hair down you can't tell. I look like just another blonde West Island tomboy. I stand up and Heather and I look around at all the people staring at us and we share a look. The best way to blow these people's minds is obvious to both of us. These people are expecting a freak show, so we give them one. Heather French-kisses me, and I slide my hand under her top, squeezing her breast as she grabs my ass. I'm not bi, or anything, but I do have gay and lesbian friends. But as funny as it is to know these White, middle-class suburbanites are shitting themselves while Heather and I make out, I do feel more than a little uncomfortable doing this. I do get a little wet though. Maybe that's why I'm more than a little uncomfortable. So, when Heather and me stop kissing, she asks:

“You ready to go?”

“Yeah; I just have to swing by my place to get changed.”

“Cool. We'll call Brian from your place so he doesn't have a spaz.”

So, I'm still wearing Jeff's *Sisters Of Mercy* T-Shirt when we get back into the car from my place. But I've also put on a super short skirt with spandex shorts underneath, and my hair is tied up, the sides of my head just shaved, and black and white striped thigh-high stockings and my Docs complete my evening wear. I wore something less dressy to my Prom. Me and Heather share a joint on the way over to Brian's.

"Julie...can I ask you something?" she says, lowering the volume on the Ministry tape we were blasting. For a minute, I'm kinda afraid she's going to ask if I liked kissing and touching her before. Thinking about it makes me remember how her nipple felt in my hand. But I don't really want to think about it. The trouble is I do think about it. See back when me and Heather were in high school we went on a camping trip one summer with her parents. This was before Heather shaved her head and before I turned into Skate Girl. We had a tent just the two of us, Heather's parents in one tent and her brother and his friends in another. That night me and Heather—both virgins at the time—started talking about sex and stuff; we started talking about sex with another girl and it wasn't long before we were kissing and touching each other. It was beautiful but it was kinda weird and uncomfortable, too. It was the only time anything like that ever happened and we never told anyone else about it.

"Umm...sure. What?" I asked, really afraid of what she's goanna say.

"When we all left this afternoon...you and Jeff shot up, didn't you?"

"Yeah, we each had a hit," I said.

I almost wish she'd asked me the other thing instead, 'cause I know what's coming next.

"Is that why you were so strung out?" She takes her eyes off the road long enough to give me a questioning look.

“Probably, yeah,” I tell her.

No probably about it, and we both know it.

“Julie...heroin is so dangerous! And it’s easy to get hooked on! It’s not like weed, or even acid! Why do you do it?”

“Jeff and me only do it once in a while!” I tell her. “It’s not like we’re doing it every day, twice a day!”

“And when we all started smoking as kids a pack lasted us a week. Julie, just think about what you’re doing. You’re putting poison...real poison...into your body.”

“Okay,” I say, “can we not talk about it right now, please? I wanna have some fun tonight.”

People who’ve never done smack just don’t get it. I know how addictive it is. I know what it can do to me. That’s why I don’t do it often. But, how can I *not* do it? The rush is unbelievable; like getting fucked by God. It’s chemical bliss.

So, when we get to Brian’s everybody’s hanging out in his living room, his mom and dad giving us our space, by staying in the kitchen. Everyone’s smoking a butt. Brian...Will...Gertie...Dave...they’re all lit up in this small space.

“Jesus!” Heather says, “It’s like the Oval in here!” And that’s probably another reason Brian’s parents are hiding in the other room.

“Ready to go?” Bri’ asks.

“Are we taking my car or yours?” Dave asks Heather, as he gets up.

“We’ll never all fit in one car,” Heather tells him, “Me and Julie will take my car and you, Will, Brian and Gertie can take yours.”

“I hate paying for parking downtown,” Dave growls.

“We’ll split the parking and gas,” Heather says, looking each of us in the eyes. In other words, *pay for parking or else*, “Five bucks from everybody and we’ll both have enough for parking and ten bucks of gas.”

So, that settles that. We drive down out to Highway 20 and head downtown.

La Nausée, the Nausea in English, is one of two great Punk clubs in Downtown Montreal, the other being Les Foufounes Électriques (The Electric Ass-Cheeks). La Nausée is on St-Laurent Boulevard, near Ste Catherine Street. It’s on the top floor of this converted warehouse and you have to go up three flights of steep concrete stairs to get there. When you get up the stairs, you’re in this bare lobby with a coat-check. Given the ongoing war in this town between the fucking skinheads and the punks, coat-check is mandatory. The lobby and the front bar are decorated with wall-to-wall airbrush reproductions of H. R. Giger’s surreal paintings; *Li II*, and *Biomechanical Landscape*, mainly. There’s a dance bar at the back of La Nausée and the front bar is more of a pool-hall type of place. The two bars are separated by a short hallway that leads to the bathrooms; both bars play the same music, but the front bar is the place that the Crescent Street Ginos hang out in to pretend that they’re hanging out with the Bad Boys. It’s brightly lit and, other than the music, could be any other pool bar downtown. La Nausée plays a lot of hardcore, industrial, punk and alternative stuff. One of two places in town to go if you want to hear Ministry, or Nine Inch Nails, or Skinny Puppy music in a club. And when you cross that hallway, instead of going down it to the bathrooms, you cross into *our* world.

The dance bar at La Nausée is all strobe and blacklight. The music is about twice as loud as it is in the pool bar, and there are no real tables. Instead, wire mesh bars are set up all over the place with stools on either side of them. The actual order-drinks-here bars are set up along the two outside walls, and by the DJ booth is a small lounge area with shitty vinyl furniture. The room is dominated by the elevated dance floor where most of the strobe lights and the fog machine are concentrated.

So, the six of us check our coats and head straight in to the dance bar. Dave and Will go stake out a place for us to sit, Gertie and Bri' go get the first round, and Heather and me go dance. Gertie and Bri' bring our drinks to us and join us dancing. Gertie's the first of us to quit and go sit down as Will comes up to dance. Of the six of us, Gertie looks the most out of place. She's glammed up in black, but it's more the type of outfit you'd wear at Metropolis than La Nausée. Dave's in his usual uniform of black on black on black, with a braided ponytail-Mohawk. Brian's the kind of person who dresses neutral: faded blue jeans and a tight white T-shirt, his blonde hair neither long, nor short; Will's more of a rocker type, with his shoulder-length hair and his close-shaved beard, and the faded jeans and t-shirt with the plaid flannel tied around his waist. More and more of us nonconformists are starting to dress the way he does, though, and I've started to hear the word Gung or Gunge or Grunge used to describe the look. No doubt three hundred-dollar Gap outfits aren't far behind. I like Will. He's an interesting guy, and I don't spend enough time hanging out with him. If I weren't dating Jeff, though, I have to say I'd probably be with Dave--or at least fooling around with him. Dave doesn't seem

the type of guy you'd want to get serious with, or the type you'd trust too much, if you were serious. But he's well cut; he works in construction and does a lot of exercise. I'm not sure, but I think him and Gertie might have a thing. The way they hang around each other...I don't know because whenever Will and Gertie are together, you'd swear *they* were going out. But something about the way she is when she's with Dave...it's different, somehow; more sexual.

So, around one, about three hours after we got there, we crossed into the pool bar to relax a while. Dave and Heather have been sober all night, sticking to coke; La Nausée gives designated drivers free soft drinks all night, which is cool of them, but it sucks watching all your friends get bombed while you sip sodas. Gertie and Will are pretty hammered and very touchy-feely, and Brian is also definitely feeling no pain. He's a little antsy, though, and keeps looking at his watch, and out into the hallway. I've had a few, myself, and I'm in that horny-drunk-girl stage where I wish Jeff were here. I guess that this is the type of moment that confirms to you that you're young and this is your time to be alive. I don't know. For me, this is just another Friday night out with my friends.

Brian Klein: Needs

I first noticed the guy when we all crossed into La Nausée's dance bar. He just locked in on me, making me notice him. Total eye contact...and it was like I couldn't look away. Dave and Will went to get us a place to sit and Julie and Heather went dancing. Gertie came with me to get the drinks, chattering away about how cool the club was. I don't know. Gertie's a flake and I wasn't really paying much attention. I know Will and Dave are into her but I really don't know why. That guy was at the bar and while I was waiting for our drinks ignoring Gertie's loud, pointless chatter, it's like I locked in on him again. He was just staring at me. I wanted to look away but I couldn't. It was like I was hypnotized or something, because I just wanted to keep looking at him. I guess Gertie got that I wasn't paying her any attention but didn't get that I was ignoring her because she just, like, yanked my head around! I swear if she wasn't a chick, I'd have decked her.

"Pay attention!" she said, all annoyed, "I'm talking to you!"

And she started off again. Thank God our drinks came, because I swear I almost told her to shut the fuck up. We brought over Dave's coke and Will's screwdriver, and then headed to the dance floor to bring Heather her ginger ale and Julie her zombie. Each of us would take turns buying a round for the group except for Heather and Dave, who were getting their sodas for free because they were the designated drivers. On the dance floor I took a minute to watch Julie and Heather dancing. God damn, I love Punk chicks! They look so hot when they're grinding each other and dancing and shit. Heather, Julie, me and Gertie danced for almost an hour before Gertie quit, and then Will joined us for a

while. Then I noticed that *He* was there: that guy again; dancing alone, watching me. He was wearing a black T-shirt and jeans, well-worn Doc Martens on his feet; typical twentysomething uniform. He wore it well. And he was staring all at me. He didn't even look Heather and Julie's way when they started grinding into each other while dancing. I couldn't take it. I could feel his eyes on me even when I wasn't looking at him. I left the dance floor and went out into the hallway.

I skipped the bathrooms and followed the hall to where it bent to join the vestibule with the two bars. There's a closed-off stairway at the end of that hallway that leads up either to offices or a terrace, or something. I parked myself there between the dance bar and the pool bar, just listening to all the noise. The guy came over. Of course he did. I should have known.

"Here you are," he said.

"Yeah," I answered, "Do I know you, or something?"

"No," he said, "But I've been noticing you all night."

He smiled.

"I noticed," I said, "Can I help you?"

I lit a cigarette. I wanted to look at him but I couldn't. Every time I met his eyes, I just felt...funny.

"I was wondering if I maybe I could buy you a drink," he shouted over the noise of the club, "Or maybe if you wanted to get out of here."

"I think you got the wrong idea. Besides, I came with some friends," I told him. But, he wasn't giving up.

“I thought maybe you’d like to come with me instead,”

“I don’t know,”

The guy smiled again. Too late, I got his double entendre. His smile was...thrilling somehow, because *he* was smiling at *me*.

“Maybe later then,”

He turned to go, and then as he started walking away, he turned back to look at me.

“My name’s Alec, by the way.”

“Brian,” I told him, without thinking.

Why the fuck did I tell him my name? I hate when this sort of shit happens to me. Gay guys seem to hit on me all the time. I don’t know if I give off a vibe, or what. I mean, yes, okay, I admit that I find some guys good looking, attractive even. I even found myself in a circle jerk once with this guy I knew from high school, but... Hell. I don’t want to say something as cheesy as I’m all about the ladies, but I’m, like, *totally* attracted to women. I guess just not *exclusively*. That Alec guy just hit a nerve. He was tall with blue eyes and broad shoulders, thin but not athletic, with those high cheekbones. He was at least a couple years older than me and just overall really good looking. I felt upset, scared, angry...I wanted to pound the guy. And at the same time...

Later on, I tried to get him outta my head by looking up Heather’s skirt. Like I said I’m into Punk chicks, but as I sat drinking and imagining Heather’s legs up on my shoulders, Alec kept popping back into my mind. I don’t understand; I’m not gay! Yeah, there’s guys I find attractive, but I never...I mean, I’d never...God dammit.

We were sitting in the pool bar. I guess it was around one. I'd run into Alec a couple more times, crossing paths with him here and there. Now I was trying to avoid him by sticking by my friends. We were all sitting at the tables by the window overlooking the street. It's funny, but I don't immediately associate windows with La Nausée. Heather and Dave were doing the 'we're-sober-let's-ignore-the-drunks thing'; I noticed his hand slide over Heather's knee more than once, slipping under her hemline even. I swear to God, Dave can get any woman to sleep with him. I know a few guys that want to kick the shit out of him for sleeping with their girlfriends. The thing is it's not like those women were unwilling participants. They coulda said no. Julie sure as hell did when Dave hit on her. Jeff wanted to kill him when he found out Dave had made a pass at her. Dave is Will's friend more than anyone else's, and so we've all known Dave for a lot less time than Will has. And we haven't really known Will all that long, anyway: Me, Jeff, Heather and Julie knew each other in high school. Then Pascal and Jeff hooked up when they ended up in the same band a year before we graduated. Then Jeff met Will. But it was Will that actually cooled things down between Jeff and Dave, but I don't think Jeff woulda stayed home tonight if he knew Dave was here. Will and Gertie were cuddling: making out, sort of. Gertie's very...physically affectionate: a cock-tease, basically. You can never tell if she's just being friendly or seriously making out with someone without being that person. And frankly, I wouldn't want to be that person. Gertie is so totally not my type of girl; in fact she fucking repulses me. Julie and me were sitting farthest from the window, and so we were drinking and relaxing, and watching the crowd. At least, I was trying to relax. I kept thinking about Alec...about how he made me feel when he'd smiled at me, about him hitting on me...I wanted to get

out of here. We were staying until closing and no matter how often I checked the time, it was still forever off. I wanted to leave. I wanted to be anywhere but at La Nausée with Alec wandering around...and I wanted - I wanted to be with Alec. And then I saw him again looking into the pool bar, looking for me - looking at me. He walked past without coming in and I knew what it was I really wanted...what I really needed.

“I just saw someone I know,” I said to Julie. “I’m gonna go say hi.”

I followed Alec down the hall. He looked over his shoulder to make sure I was behind him and smiled. I followed him into the Men’s room and after making sure that nobody else was in the bathroom, into the farthest stall on the left. La Nausée is close to a couple of gay bars, but it totally isn't part of that scene. Although not many Skinheads hung out at La Nausée, there were enough Punk types that didn't like gays to make what we were doing dangerous to our health.

The throbbing bass from the club’s speakers made the grillwork of the bathroom walls rattle in rhythm with the music: my heart was pounding right along with it. So was my cock. Alec reached to lock the stall door; in all the excitement I guess I forgot to. Alec’s eyes never left mine, his arms went to my shoulders and he leaned in and kissed me. I’d never kissed a man before. It was different from a woman’s kiss; I can’t explain how, but it was. The smell of Alec’s skin and cologne weighed heavy in the air around me and feeling myself wrapped in his arms...God, when I'm with a chick I never felt this vulnerable...feeling him hard against my leg, feeling his tongue against mine...my blood

was pounding, my cock was throbbing and I felt flush and hot. I felt lightheaded, excited, scared—overwhelmed. I had to stop.

“What?” Alec asked.

“I...I just...” I looked at him and then looked away, “I’ve never gone this far with a guy.”

Alec smiled again, and then laughed.

“Then maybe we should be somewhere else,” he said, “Your place...?”

“I’m from the West Island,” I told him, “And I live with my parents.” Alec laughed again.

“How about my place? If you want to,”

I thought about it. I wanted to, I didn’t want to. I didn’t know what I would feel if I went, or if I stayed here, safe, with my friends. But I was looking into his face, those eyes penetrating me, and I suddenly knew that tonight I didn’t want something safe.

“I’ll have to go tell my friends that I’m leaving,” I said.

Alec waited for me in the vestibule while I said goodbye to everybody. I told them I’d met up with some people I hadn’t seen in a while and I’d be going back with them. Alec and I went downstairs and hailed a cab.

Alec had a place in Gay Village, not far from downtown and only a few blocks north of Ste Catherine's street. To be honest, I was so afraid and excited I can’t remember much about the place. Part of me kept wondering what I was doing there, how I’d let this happen, and another part of me wanted to fuck and to be fucked.

“So, this is your first time,” Alec said, leading me by the hands to sit down on his sofa, “Would you like me to start?” He started leaning towards me.

“Wait, wait, wait a minute!” I stuttered, “I’m kinda...I’m...I’m really fucking nervous here. I don’t know what to do...or what it is you’re gonna do to me.”

“I’ll do whatever you want me to,” he said, “And you can do whatever you want to me. What you don’t want to do, what you don’t want me to do doesn’t have to happen.”

He reached for a box on his table and pulled out a ziplock fulla weed and some Zig-Zag papers.

“Brian, listen, would you like to smoke a joint first? Loosen up a little?”

I didn’t like the term “loosen up” all that much. I guess it showed on my face.

“Okay, bad choice of words; I meant would you like a joint to help you *relax*, a little?”

I almost never smoke up. In fact if there’s one thing that bugs me about my friends, it’s the amount of time and money they waste on drugs. Okay, yeah, every once in a while I’ll smoke up or drop a little ‘cid, but not like these guys who are getting stoned almost every day. But right at that particular moment, scared, horny, stressed out, smoking a joint didn’t seem like such a bad idea at all.

“Yeah,” I told him, “Yeah, a joint sounds real good.”

Later, we were lying in his bed. Alec ran his hand over my body and I felt the rough texture of his hands against my skin. I shivered. His touch was firm and gentle all at once, but when he took my dick in his hand he was rough, holding it hard, tight, and

stroking me with a man's grip. Most women don't get just how rough and hard you can be with a cock. But Alec knew; of course he did and it was so fucking good. His eyes were half-closed and he was breathing heavy and despite the heat I felt in my body I felt goosebumps rise all over me. The way his hand felt as he slid it up and down my dick, keeping a tight hold on me was unbelievable. I never wanted it to end, and all I wanted to do was come. I reached for his cock, doing to him what he was doing to me. Our eyes met and we watched each other as we beat each other off, listening to the sounds of our breathing and the noises our hands and cocks were making. I was lying on my back and Alec was on his side leaning over me. He kept wincing, closing his eyes and biting his lip, making little grunts and moans that echoed my own. I started squeezing the tip of his cock underneath as I stroked it, touching him the way I touch myself. He grunted and thrust into my hand. I started stroking him harder. He moved to be able to use both of his hands, squeezing and massaging my balls while he pumped by dick. It wasn't long before I felt it happening...before I knew I was about to let go...

"Oh, God!" I shouted. "I'm goanna come!"

Alec let me go, and kissed me. I was shaking and frustrated as I kissed him back, trying to take his hand and put it back on my cock. I was sore I wanted to come so bad.

"Not yet," he said. "Not yet."

Alec moved between my legs, putting them up on his shoulders. He leaned forward, and took me in his mouth. No woman had ever given me head, like that. His tongue was driving into the tip of my penis hard and probing, and he was sucking on me so strong, his tongue and teeth and lips going everywhere on me...I started moaning again and then I was screaming as Alec took me higher and higher...I still wasn't coming...every time I

thought I was about to he did something else and the feeling in me climbed higher...then I came. I felt like a fountain as I blew in him and he kept going down on me until at last I pushed him off. I lay there sweating, catching my breath. Alec took a bottle of Scope from his bedside table and rinsed his mouth, spitting into the garbage pail by his bed.

“I swear I’m the only fag on Earth who hates the taste of spunk,” he said.

I looked at him lying there, still hard and so beautiful, and rolled over on top of him.

“Let’s find out how much I like the taste,” I said, going down on him.

All I could think about was how he felt, how he tasted in my mouth. I slid the tip of my tongue around the rim of Alec’s dick, sucking on him the way he had sucked on me. It just felt so right...But I was so aware that this was the first blowjob I was giving it was hard to enjoy. I kept thinking about every porno I’d ever seen, about every thing I’d ever had a girl do when she went down on me, about everything Alec had just done to me. At one point Alec actually stopped me.

“Brian...relax...this isn’t an exam...Just go with it. Do what you want to do.”

I was blushing and embarrassed and I felt stupid, but he pulled me up to him and kissed me, before pushing me back down between my legs.

“Now, come on...suck my cock...” he whispered.

I woke up next to Alec the next morning. We’d fucked all night, although I didn’t let him go inside me, I wasn’t ready for that yet. But Alec had let me fuck his ass; it was incredible. I’d never done anal with a girl let alone a guy and so this was my first time. I’d put a condom on, and he’d lubed himself with some Joy Jelly, and then he coached me in, telling me to go slowly, when to stop, when to start again as his muscles relaxed

against me. There's resistance at first as you try pushing through, and then all of a sudden it gives way and you slide inside with this really strong tightness around you as you fuck. I moved inside him slowly at first, following his instructions until he was moaning and shouting, and I lost control and just started pounding into him, grabbing onto his hips as I fucked him. Now, lying next to him I stole one of Alec's Dunhills, lighting it up with some matches on my side of the bed. I kept going over the last night's events. God, I'd just had sex with a *man*! What did that mean? I was confused, because now more than ever I knew I was into guys...but, I was still into girls! Wasn't I? What was happening to me?

"Something wrong?" Alec asked with a yawn.

I looked over at him. He was lighting a cigarette, too.

"Yeah," I said, "I'm...I feel confused, and...well, I mean last night was really great...but I feel pretty fucked up right now."

Alec blew out some smoke.

"That's natural," he said, "You just went all the way with a guy for the first time. You just confronted your sexuality head-on, and admitting that you're gay to yourself is always the hardest."

"But that's just it!" I told him, "I *know* I still like girls."

Alec smirked.

"Brian...you're still a little in denial. It's tough, but you have to think this through."

"But...isn't it possible that I'm bi or something?"

Alec shook his head.

“No such thing, in my experience. People who claim to be bisexual are just confused and in denial about their homosexuality.”

“I...I don't think I believe that.”

Alec shrugged.

“I think in the long run that you will.”

I sat up, swinging my legs out of bed.

“Right now, Alec, I'm sorry man, but right now I just have to get outta here and go think about things for a while.”

I got out of bed and started getting dressed.

“I'd like to see you again, Brian.”

I couldn't meet his eyes. I felt suddenly very naked, very self-conscious, but I didn't want to not be there either.

“Gimme a pen and I'll leave you my phone number,” I said.

“No,” Alec told me, “I'll give you *my* number. That way, if you call, I know that you want to see me.”

“Okay,” I said, “But I'm not sure I'm looking for a boyfriend.”

“Neither am I.”

He wrote down his number and gave it to me as I finished getting dressed.

I hiked down back to Sainte Catherine's Street and then grabbed a late breakfast at a coffee shop. To get back to the West Island from downtown, you have to either take the train from Windsor Station, or take the Metro to Lionel Groulx station and the #211 bus either to Dorval or straight through to Sainte Anne's. I coulda hopped the Metro at

Bleury and taken it to Lionel Groulx, but instead I decided to walk all the way down Ste Catherine's to Atwater and then down to Lionel Groulx station. The street was slushy with half-melted snow and crowded with shoppers and it was cold, but not unpleasant. It was warm enough that my jacket was open, although I kept my hands in my pockets when I wasn't smoking a cigarette. As I was walking I just got so paranoid. I kept wondering if these people were looking at me, if somehow they could tell I'd spent the night with another man, if, somehow, I suddenly looked gay, if, for that matter, I really was gay.

By the time I made it to Lionel Groulx I'd missed the bus, so I went to get a coffee at a nearby Dunkin' Donuts. I stood in line for the next bus, smoking and drinking my coffee. My head was fucked and I needed to talk to somebody. I couldn't think, and my body just wanted me to go home, shower and sleep, but I needed to talk to someone and only one person's face kept appearing in my mind, like a life preserver, like a tether keeping me from flying away. By the time the next number 211 pulled in, I had made the decision to ride it into Sainte Anne's and go straight to Sophie's.

Jeff McBride: Drug Abuse At Three A.M.

I guess I'd been awake for a while...but I'd only really regained consciousness at that moment. Somewhere in my blackout, I'd put on my Pink Floyd *Animals* CD and switched on the blacklight. I was even having a cigarette. I was sitting up in bed, staring at the far wall, at my turned-off TV and my stereo. My bottle of Southern Comfort was open on the table by my bed. So was my bottle of Tylenol Number One. Huh. I wondered how many I'd taken. I wondered where Julie was, right now. I wish she had a cellular phone.

I wake up often in the middle of the night. I always have, ever since I was a kid. I've always found it to be my time. Playing in bed with my Star Wars action figures...reading my dad's pornos...doing homework or cramming for an exam...getting high...listening to music, or even writing some.

Sometimes, when Julie sneaks over to spend the night, when I wake up I'll wake her up as well and we'll get high and talk or have sex. But most of the time if she comes over and I wake up at night, I just like to watch her sleep.

Right now, though, I was so fucked up I couldn't tell if I was going up or coming down. Between the smack I'd shot up earlier with Julie, the dope I'd smoked after she left and the booze and pills I'd seemingly done during my blackout, I was all over the map. My head was dizzy and my arms felt like lead. Lying down, I couldn't fall asleep,

and it was hard to breathe. I decided to sneak down to the kitchen and make myself some coffee. My parents have a big coffee maker and one of those little two-cup dealies that Phillips just started selling. Mom won't let me put it in my room like I wanted, so I just sat at the island smoking a butt waiting for this little coffee maker to fill my big mug. After I fixed my coffee I headed back to my room. I decided to change CDs. I took *Animals* out of the CD player and started browsing my collection. In 1988 and 1989 two great metal albums came out; one that was huge and totally popular and the other one was really obscure. I don't think that anyone on the planet hasn't heard Guns N' Roses *Appetite For Destruction* yet, but how many had heard *Bleach*, by Nirvana? Of the two CDs, I was more in the mood for the obscure. A friend of mine works summers downtown at this record shop on St Laurent. She turned me on to Nirvana. I put my headphones on because Nirvana is best enjoyed loud. If these guys ever catch on it's gonna change the face of music. Their second album's due out this fall and I can't wait to get it.

With music blasting in my ears and coffee warming my nauseous belly I lit up another cigarette and sat at the small desk in my room. I wanted to try getting out some lyrics for this wicked guitar riff I came up with. But tonight...inspiration was lacking. Maybe there were too many drugs in my system or not enough. The coffee hadn't kicked in the way I'd hoped. I was still on a downer. I suppose I would have needed a stronger stimulant like speed to get me up, but I don't fuck with that stuff. So I was too tired to write and too strung out to sleep. It was a lousy place to be in the late hours of a dark and endless winter's night.

I guess I have a self-destructive streak; I don't know, but I decided to roll up the last little bit of grass I had with a little dusting of heroin. The mix is called Red Rooster and it's really fucking potent. Julie had left me her panties when she left. Before lighting up I went back to lie down, smelling her on the lacy black cotton. The scent of her cunt was strong and I closed my eyes and masturbated while breathing her in. When I came, I wiped my hand on the sheets and then lit the joint and inhaled deeply. It took only a few tokes before I felt completely wrecked. It was like I started falling into myself. I had just enough strength to put the joint in my ashtray and stub it out. Then I just lay there staring up at the ceiling, numb, while it felt like I was sinking into the bed. All the drugs in my system seemed to have renewed themselves from that half-smoked spliff. I felt paralyzed and despite it all I couldn't sleep or pass out. I had these visions...black creatures with evil eyes on the edge of my line of sight, creeping around the bed, but I couldn't even move my eyes to see. So I stared at the ceiling and watched the room slowly get lighter and brighter. Finally, sometime after sunrise, I fell asleep.

When I came to it was already three o'clock in the afternoon and getting dark. Thank fucking God my parents didn't decide to come knocking on my door. My booze and pills were still out; so were the telltale signs of pot-smoking: the roach in the ashtray, rolling papers and pot stems all around it. My smack was out, too and Julie's T-shirt was supposed to be covering my works but it wasn't. The spoon, cotton balls and needle I used to shoot with were all there, for the world to see. I sat up, feeling like I'd been hit by a truck and put all my drug paraphernalia back into its various hiding places. I was

starting to have a lot of scabs and needle marks on my right arm. I decided to switch to the left for a little while, to give my right arm a break. Then I started getting dressed. I had plans to go out with Julie that night and I needed to wake up. I knew the kind of bitching I'd get from my parents for sleeping until three, but I also knew it meant they wouldn't fucking bitch about me going out that night. I wanted desperately to shoot up again, but it was so fucking late that I knew I would crash out like I did last night and Julie would be pissed because I wouldn't wanna do anything. I pulled on a pair of jogging pants and a long-sleeved T-shirt and went downstairs to get something to eat. Better to face the bitching parents now, I supposed. Tonight would be better. And when I got home I'd be able to shoot up again.

Pascal Lebrun: Saturday In Sainte Anne's

When Friday night Sophie and I had gone to Sylvain's, it was to celebrate him moving into his new apartment. He hated his old roommates and had to go out on his own. Considering that one of his roommates was my brother Michel, I can understand why he wanted to move out. Sylvain's new place was over a dépanneur in the middle of Saint Anne's. The 7-Up sign outside his front room was on, almost lighting the whole apartment up. Most of his things were still in boxes. Sylvain's new apartment was a two and a half; a front room with a fridge, stove and sink and counter on one wall, and a bedroom, and a small bathroom. At least Sylvain had a bathtub; most small apartments have only a shower. He put his television and his video by the front door and his sofa facing the door. We helped Sylvain unpack the things for the kitchen and put his kitchen table left of the couch, near the stove. When we had all finished Sylvain ordered pizza and we ate while watching a movie. Sylvain had no cable and could not get many stations on his TV. We all wanted to get high after supper, but none of us had anything left (we had smoked before supper), so we gave Sylvain money and he went downstairs to buy a 24 of beer. We listened to music, I played on my guitar and we partied all night. Finally early in the morning, Sylvain decided to go to bed. He unfolded the sofa in the living room for me and Sophie to crash and went to bed. Sophie wanted to stay up a little, so I went to bed and fell asleep.

When I woke up, Sophie was just coming to bed. She was only wearing her underwear, a loose gray tank top and bikini panties and I felt myself getting hard in my boxers as she put her arms around me and put her head on my bare chest.

“Hey Pascal,” She said, “I didn't wake you up?”

“Oui. Where were you?” I asked, hoping she wouldn't notice my erection.

“Je suis allé coucher avec Sylvain,” she said: *I went to sleep with Sylvain.*

“Oh.” I said.

I didn't know what else to say and she was happy to not say anything, closing her eyes and relaxing. Sylvain is one of my good friends and I am glad that him and Sophie could make each other happy, or at least give each other pleasure. But at the same time, I was very jealous that Sophie was with him. I noticed how warm her skin was, where her belly was touching mine and I could feel her breasts against me. I closed my eyes as she curled one leg over mine. There was a dampness I could feel on my hip, between her legs. I was jealous of Sylvain and hurt by what Sophie had told me, but it is my fault. She doesn't know what I feel about her and if she did, she might not trust me as much. I put my arm around her back, hugging her to me. She didn't notice my erection, or said nothing about it. We'd fallen asleep together many times, and sometimes if I got hard she would joke about it and we would laugh. Right now, we were just quiet, holding each other as the 7-Up sign outside kept the room light, even with the curtains closed. With my other hand I reached for my cigarettes and the ashtray on the arm of the sofa bed and lit one up.

I knew that for Sophie and for Sylvain also, probably, this was just a lay. Neither of them was serious for anything right now; but still, I wish Sophie would be like that with me. Sylvain is her friend the same as I am, but she never even talks of going to bed with me. But I don't just want to fuck her; I would want to be her boyfriend. Sophie took my cigarette and had a few puffs before giving me it back.

"Merci, Pascal," she said, and kissed my cheek. She fell asleep before I finished my cigarette. I fell asleep a while after also and in the night I dreamed that we were making love.

I woke up again the next morning when somebody was banging on the door to Sylvain's apartment.

"Sylvain!" I called, sitting up, "La porte!" Sophie was still lying against me and when I sat up she rolled over. Sylvain came out of the bedroom and opened the door. My brother, Michel was there. When I say Michel is nothing like me, I mean it. I wear what he calls hippy clothes: old t-shirts and ripped jeans, old leather boots, gauchos or ratty old sweaters. He wears designer clothing and suits. Michel is about five years older than me and already makes from his businesses something like one hundred thousand dollars a year in profit. Where I have long hair and only shave once in a while, he has his own coiffeur that he sees maybe twice a week. He lives in a big apartment and drives a nice car, but he's also an asshole. He was carrying a box under his arm when he came in. He handed the box to Sylvain.

"Here," he said, "that's the last of the shit you left at my place."

Sylvain took the box and Michel looked over at me. He smiled when he saw Sophie in the bed with me.

“Hey, not bad little brother!” he said, “Did you at least fuck her good?” I jumped out of bed, racing at him

“Mon tabarnac!” I yelled, swinging back to hit him.

Michel grabbed my other hand, and pushed me away.

“You try and see,” he said, smiling at me.

He looked over at Sophie again, who had woken up. One of her breasts was showing because her tank top had pulled up on one side.

“So how about it, baby?” Michel asked her as Sophie pulled the top down to cover herself, “My brother give it to you good?”

“Eat shit!” Sophie yelled, turning her back to him to take a cigarette.

“I got something you can eat,” Michel said.

I ran at him again, and we were fighting, wrestling one another. I wanted to kill him. He pushed me off, laughing arrogantly, and left the apartment.

“Son of a bitch!” I yelled at him as he left.

I turned around. Sylvain was putting the box down, and had a guilty look on his face.

“I’m sorry that happened,” he told us.

“I’m sorry my brother’s an asshole,” I said, finding my jeans and putting them on,

“I want to kill him sometimes.”

“It’s okay, Pascal,” Sophie told me as she pulled on her jeans and a sweater,

“Really. Just relax. Why don’t we all go out for breakfast?”

“I want to stay here and start unpacking,” Sylvain said, “I want that pizza for breakfast, anyway. Let’s see each other at the Brasserie tonight.”

“Okay,” I said.

“Yeah, okay,” Sophie said.

She kissed Sylvain on the mouth and we got on our coats and boots and walked down to Saint Anne’s to get some breakfast.

“Are you okay, Pascal?” Sophie asked me.

“I’m just angry at my brother,” I said, “I don’t like that, when he talks about you like you’re a whore.”

“Pascal, it’s okay. He’s an asshole like you said. I don’t give a fuck what he says about me. You shouldn’t either.”

“I care about you, Sophie,” I said, wanting to say more than just this, “And I don’t like it when someone treats you like this.”

“He only does it because he knows it’ll hurt you, Pascal. You should just learn to ignore him. Now come on. Let’s have some breakfast, okay?” She kissed me on the cheek and we went into the café.

I tried to pretend to cheer up, but inside, I was still upset. I was very pissed off about my brother Michel and I was still down because Sophie had slept with Sylvain last night. But mainly, it was my brother that was bothering me.

Michel, like I said, is five years older than me. He has always been my family’s hero and I have always been the disappointment. Michel went to business school and then with all the money he got for graduation, he did investment. Michel's actions are in

drug companies and in computer program companies. Michel made a gamble and won. He got almost two million from his actions that he used to buy some businesses. Michel owns a car wash in Dorval, a dépanneur in Lachine and an apartment block in Ville D'Anjou. They all make him such money that he does not work anymore; he just finds new places to invest his money. He has always been arrogant and was even more arrogant after he became a millionaire businessman.

My parents felt so betrayed when I told them first, that I want to go to English school and second, that I wanted to go in fine arts, they threw me out. I went to live with my uncle in Pierrefonds and now I work so I can go to school. And my uncle pays for a lot of things I wish he didn't have to for me. Michel loves that I was kicked out of home, and loves that my parents are so angry with me. When I started hanging out with Sophie, he did everything he could to sleep with her. Just to piss me off. Thank God Sophie never did and thank God she hates him, because I can deal with Sophie not being with me and I can deal with her going around with other guys, but I couldn't deal with it if she and Michel fucked.

After breakfast we went back to Sophie's place. Most of the buildings in Saint Anne's have the same style: rusty red brick with slate roofs and arched windows. Sophie's house even had a big window in front and one of those miniature towers on one corner. We went in around the back, coming in through the kitchen. We were the only people in the house, other than whoever was in the shower in the downstairs bathroom. I love Sophie's house. The living room has a big TV and a great stereo, a big poster of Jim

Morrison on one wall and two big, long couches. There is a female presence to the house, with the little decorations they put up and the drapes and things like this, like plants and stuff. Sophie's room, though...she's a girl after my own heart. There's a big Jamaican flag over her bed, with Bob Marley on it smoking a big joint. A blacklight poster of marijuana leaves is on the other wall. Where her dresser is, there are posters of Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, The Doors and The Who. The rest of the place is a complete mess except for her desk where her homework is always piled in straight stacks next to her computer. We went to her room and relaxed on her bed.

“So, what do you want to do today?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I said, “This is the first Saturday in weeks that I don't work.”

“Cool. Want me to make some calls, see if we can score?”

“Nah; well, maybe for tonight but not for right now.”

“Cool,”

Someone knocked on Sophie's door. She opened it and one of her roommates, this Chinese or Japanese girl, is standing there wearing a towel with her hair all wet.

“Sophie, there's someone at the door for you,” she said.

“Okay, thanks, Tanya,” Sophie said.

I can't help noticing Tanya's ass is sticking out the bottom of her towel. She has a great body. If Tanya weren't such a West Island girl, into money and fashion and the type of asshole guy like Michel I might ask her out. But she doesn't date guys like me; she's a model, I think Sophie told me once.

Sophie went to the front door and I heard her talking with a guy and he was crying. She came back with Brian.

“Pascal, I’m sorry. Can you give us a few minutes?”

“No problem,” I said.

Brian was very upset. It was obvious something was really wrong.

“I hope you feel better, Brian,” I told him, “Try and take things easy. It’ll be all right.”

“Thanks, man,” Brian says.

I went to the living room to sit down while Sophie and Brian talked. I could hear him crying and it embarrassed me a little that I have to be there to know he’s crying when he should have had privacy with Sophie. Another reason I love Sophie so much is because everyone comes to her with their problems. She’s always there for everyone. I watched a little television but after a while it was obvious that Sophie and Brian were going to be talking for a long time. I went back down to Sophie’s room and knocked on the door.

“Salut Pascal,” she said, “We’re still busy in here. Sorry.”

I could see Brian sitting on the edge of her bed, not crying anymore but he was red in the face and smoking a cigarette.

“It’s okay,” I told her, “I’m going to go into Saint Anne’s to the pool hall. I might take the bus to Fairview.”

“After are you going back home?” I shook my head.

“I don’t know,” I told her, “It’s one o’clock now, I’ll call you at five.”

“Come back tonight,” Sophie said, “I wanna see you.”

“Okay,” I said.

She hugged me, and kissed me.

“Take care, Brian,” I said, “Bon courage.”

“Thanks,” he said.

I put on my jacket and went back down into Saint Anne's. The pool hall was open, so I went in and played some games for a while. They had Super Mario Brothers and some cool pinball. A couple of people I know came in and we played a couple of games of pool. They left and I was bored anyway, so I went down to the locks. The water was mostly frozen with snow on top, but there were holes here and there. I could see on the Lac Des Deux Montagnes there were ice-fishing cabins. I had always wanted to go ice fishing. Not to actually fish, but to stay out on this frozen lake all night, maybe with some friends, maybe getting high. I've always wanted to go to the Antarctic...spend some time there out at the South Pole. I've always been fascinated by water and by ice. In Sciences Physiques in High School we learned that water is like no other substance. It expands when it freezes, gets contracted when it heats and has solid, liquid and vapour stages. Water is magic my professor told us: without it life on this planet is not possible. I must have stood watching the frozen lake for a while, because when I finally noticed the time it was getting dark and was almost five O'clock. I get that way sometimes. I'll focus on something, or think about things and not see the time. Anyway, I went back from the locks to Boulevard Sainte Anne and to the café to get a hot coffee. I called Sophie from the pay phone. Brian was still over, but he was okay again. Sylvain was there and Heather and that guy Dave were on their way over; everybody wanted to go to Pointe Claire to see a movie and Sophie was making supper first. So I went back to Sophie's, anxious to see her again.

Will Edwards: Beware The Ides Of March

If you take a relaxed approach to your course calendar when you go to CEGEP, you can pretty much guarantee learning at a leisurely pace. That's why I was in the second year of the two-year Literature and Languages program, fully expecting at least another year and a half would elapse before I graduated. Why? Simply put, I watched almost all the people I went to high school with go into John Abbott, Dawson, and even Marianapolis College and wash out in two semesters. You fail two semesters and you're expelled. The reason these people washed out? I'm convinced it's because they gave themselves back-to-back, nonstop course loads. Me, I take two and sometimes three courses a day and I try, whenever possible, to have Fridays off. I have hour and a half and sometimes three hour breaks between classes. The great thing about our CEGEP system is as long as I keep a minimum number of courses on my schedule and pass a minimum number of those courses I can keep on going to school year after year. So given that I'm taking my time about my education it also means I have a lot of free time during the day; that's why I'm almost always down in the Oval for a good portion of the day.

It was early March and winter was finally going away. Spring Break was coming up and even though the semester wasn't quite half-over it was hard to concentrate on school. In fact, it was nice enough out today that pretty much everyone was cutting class or skipping class altogether. I was supposed to have gone to my English class this morning, but with no real interest in encountering Dennis Hopper I decided to camp out

in the Oval instead. I had my Filmmaking class later this afternoon and it was still up in the air as to whether or not I'd go. Right now I was enjoying a big mug of coffee and a cigarette, just relaxing. Since January the band had continued rehearsing to the point that we had fully come together and we'd even settled on a name: The Psychic Circus. Jeff had secured us a paying gig at Le Chez, a dance/live act bar in this small town ten minutes west of Saint Anne's called Vaudreuil. It was a popular hangout for West Island club hoppers and French kids from the surrounding towns. We were scheduled to play next weekend and so we had stepped up rehearsals. Le Chez was apparently a gateway gig; it was the type of place you played where scouts from other venues went to see you perform. Brian, who was taking photography courses, had taken our publicity shots and helped us produce our first batch of promotional flyers. Jeff had actually cut school today to go out trying to find us more gigs.

"Hey!" a familiar voice said, "Long time, no see!"

"Krystal," I said, "Holy shit! It has been a while!"

I got up to give Krystal a hug and we sat down together.

"Where have you been?" I asked her, "I don't think I've seen you down here, in forever."

"Well I quit smoking," She said, lighting up a Du Maurier King.

"Quit quitting, too?"

She laughed.

"Yeah; and I've been down here a couple of times, but you were always lost in that gang of people you've been hanging out with."

“You should have come over,” I told her, “Are you here long? It’d be great to catch up.”

Krystal shook her head.

“I’m just here for a few minutes on break,” She said, “I’ve got a three hour class I’m in the middle of.”

Most teachers, except for a few assholes, let everyone out of class midway through the three-hour classes for a fifteen-minute break. And most of those same teachers let class out ten or fifteen minutes early at the end of class too.

“Aren’t *you* supposed to be in a class, right now?” she asked me.

“Yeah; advanced Creative Writing with Dick Leary. I just couldn’t deal with, today.”

“So you’ll be hiding down here...what? Four more hours?”

“Yeah; if I don’t fuck off or go to the library to watch a movie.”

“The joys of higher education,” Krystal said, mirthfully.

“Did you hear Gertie’s moving out of her parent’s place?”

“Really?”

“Yeah,” I told her, “This weekend as a matter of fact. Dave and I are helping her move.”

“What spawned that decision?”

I shrugged, lighting up another cigarette before answering.

“I’m still not too clear on that one,” I said, “She *says* it was time to go. She’s found a one and a half in Ile Perrot near enough to Saint Anne’s and the rent is cheap.”

“How is she going to afford that and school?”

“How do you think? Her parents are paying for it. Her rent and everything else is her responsibility, but she says she pulls in enough with her job to cover it.”

“Oh, so she's opted for Sovereignty-Association. Well we shall see what happens, won't we?"

Around lunch time I pretty much knew I wasn't going to go to class. But I was getting bored of hanging out in the Oval so I decided to climb out of the basement and head out to the picnic area set up outside between the Casgrain and Herzberg buildings. There was a concrete balcony and a flight of steps leading down to the real Oval: a large oval-shaped island lawn bordered by the roadway leading up to Hertzberg and what was considered John Abbott College's main entrance. I found Julie outside with Heather, both of them taking advantage of the bare concrete below the steps to run a few tricks on their skateboards. I sat down at the bottom of the steps, careful not to park my ass in a still-melting snowbank to watch them skate. Sooner or later one of the security guards--either Flash or Roz as we called them--would show up and bust up their party. Flash was a skinny, slow-walking old guy who looked like he'd been around since the Pinkerton Men first started doing security work in the Old West. Roz was so-called because she was short, Black and extremely fat, resembling a caricature of Roz the Bailiff on TV's *Night Court*. Julie and Heather stopped their boarding when they noticed me sitting there. They came over, and I got kisses from both of them, by way of greeting.

“Hey, guys,” I said, “Skipping class?”

“Yeah,” Heather said, “You?”

While she'd been (briefly) going out with Dave, Heather had died her Mohawk black and had taken to wearing it braided. The look was amazing and I had to agree with Brian: Punk chicks are really, really sexy.

"Totally," I said.

Julie checked her watch.

"You guys wanna go into Saint Anne's for a beer, or something?" she asked.

"Hey yeah," I said, "Good idea. We could go to the Brass and split a pitcher."

"Throw in a basket of onion rings and I'm there," Heather said.

She kicked her board into her hands, and it was settled. Just as we walked back into Casgrain, Flash came tottering outside, shouting for the kids on skateboards to stop all the skating.

We were sitting near the door in the Brasserie, smoking and drinking beer, idly picking at the onion rings and chicken wings that we'd ordered.

"So Gertie's moving into her new place this Friday," I said, conversationally.

"You helping her move?" Julie asked.

"Yeah. Me and Dave."

Immediately, Heather sneered. She and Dave had gone out for about a month after the night we'd all gone to La Nausée. She broke up with Dave and I could never get a straight answer as to why from her. Dave said he didn't understand why they'd broken up, but after the first time I'd broached the subject with Heather I knew better than to ask her a second time.

“Look, Will.” She had said, “I know you’re his friend and you’re my friend, too. But if you ask me about that tool again, I promise: we won’t be friends anymore.”

So that settled that. Heather was one more person I knew who didn’t like Dave.

“How about you?” I asked Julie, “Any plans for the weekend?”

“Jeff and I are going to the Pioneer, Friday,” She said, “And then on Saturday it’s Sophie’s party.”

“Oh, yeah.” I said, “I forgot about that. It’s someone’s birthday, isn’t it?”

“She’s throwing a birthday party for herself,” Heather said, “Her birthday’s not until the seventeenth, but that’s Sunday so we’re all going over to her place Saturday night to do some acid.”

“Cool!” I said, “I’m in! Do I have to score my ‘cid myself, or give someone money?”

“Sophie’s going to score for everybody,” Julie said, “Apparently, she’s got someone who’s holding a sheet of Space Language, for her.”

“Wicked.”

“All you gotta do is pay her for how many hits you want,” Heather said, “I’m going over to her place this afternoon if you wanna come.”

“I’m there.”

Right after our English class finished on Friday, without Dennis Hopper emerging, Dave and I headed out to Brittain Hall. Brittain Hall used to be residences at John Abbott, years and years ago when the campus was first opened. The original Oval Coffee House even used to be in there. A fire or something had closed the hall and

slowly but surely they were doing something inside the building; setting it up for continuing education or something. But the real advantage to Brittain's abandonment was in the fact that there were dozens of unused and lesser-known parking spots nestled between its three wings. Parking passes at Abbott cost a small fortune each Semester and there were too many fucking cars and not enough parking spots. So when Dave and I discovered Brittain it was a godsend. We walked out to the parking lot and to Dave's car, a ten-year old, white four-door Lincoln. It had plenty of trunk space and a trailer hitch, so moving Gertie in wouldn't be a problem considering Gertie's parents had said we could borrow their trailer for the move.

"Hand me my Frontline Assembly tape from the glove box, would you Will?" he asked, pulling out of the parking lot.

He pulled a tape from The Cramps out of the cassette deck and handed it to me. The glove box was full of tapes and a pair of women's panties.

"Whose are these?" I asked, fishing them out. He looked at them all puzzled and then put the crotch under his nose and sniffed.

"Ahh," He sighed, "Those would be Heather's. I guess she forgot them here. Nothing smells finer than a Punk Chick's pussy. See for yourself."

He tossed them back at me. I suspect the whole panty incident had been for my benefit. Dave tends to like to impress people, with his sexual prolifcs. He has a flair for the dramatic. Heather's panties did smell nice, though.

"I just have one stop to make before we go to Gertie's."

"Where's that?"

“Gotta go see Jesus Lizard in Hudson, and score,” He said, “Because I feel the need...”

“...The need for weed!” We shouted together.

We laughed at this takeoff of the line from Top Gun; one of those jokes that just never got old. Dave took the Frontline Assembly tap from me and slapped it into the cassette deck and we were off.

Jesus Lizard was one of Hudson’s biggest drug dealers. He was associated with one of the biker gangs, though no one was sure which and nobody wanted to ask. But he had the connections to score pretty much anything you’d ever want. He wasn’t exactly the kind of person you got to know on a friendly basis. Even just scoring weed or hash off of him, I always felt, after leaving his place, that it was touch and go to have gotten out of there alive. I mean, he was friendly as all shit when you were buying off of him, but...God forbid you should meet him in a dark alley when he was pissed off. After scoring a quarter ounce over at Jesus Lizard’s place, we headed back towards Pincourt. Dave had me roll one up on the way and we smoked with the windows up, hotboxing in the car. We were good and stoned by the time the joint was finished and we were pulling into Dorion, this one-horse town literally built with Highway 20 as its main road. Once through Dorion and across the bridge, you’re on Ile Perrot Island, divided into the towns of Pincourt, Terrasse Vaudreuil, Ile Perrot, and Notre Dame De L’Ile Perrot. Gertie lived in Pincourt, over on Shamrock. Gertie was already waiting outside because we were late. We’d actually stayed at Jesus Lizard’s place long enough to smoke him, as per dealer-buyer etiquette.

“What the fuck took you guys so long?”

“We-ah had to-ah pay ah visit to our Sweet Saviour-ah!” I said, in my best Baptist Minister voice, “And mine eyes have-ah seen the glory of the comin’ of the Lord!”

“Praise Jesus!” Dave said, “Jesus Lizard!”

“You guys are such *assholes*!” Gertie said, “You could have waited for me!”

We busied ourselves hooking up the trailer to Dave’s car and then began loading boxes into the trunk and what little furniture Gertie did own into the trailer. The whole thing took about two hours, with much horseplay between the three of us.

Once Gertie’s bed, TV, dresser and chairs were secure, she went inside to bid an overly-tearful farewell to her parents. She was a ten minute drive away, up the hill in Ile Perrot. And chances were good that she’d be doing laundry at her parents’ place every weekend, but Gertie was Gertie. Then we were in the car and heading up the hill to Gertie’s new apartment.

Gertie’s new place was in a four-apartment semi-detached dwelling on the ground floor. It was a small enough place, but nice: a kitchenette just off of the main room and the bathroom by the front door. She had a huge window overlooking the house across the street and a view of the gravel parking lot outside. We helped get her stuff inside; there was actually a small table and two chairs next to the kitchenette, on the wall dividing the rest of the living space from the bathroom. As we helped her get settled we discovered that Gertie’s bedframe had gotten broken during the move. So we put the mattresses on the floor by the window, with the TV on the opposite wall. By the time we were done it

was close enough to suppertime that we decided to get pizza. Gertie's phone wasn't hooked up yet, so she sent Dave down into Ile Perrot to get an extra large all-dressed and something to drink. Gertie and I were lying across her bed, smoking cigarettes.

"This is a really cool place," I told her, "I wish I could afford to move out from my parents'. I'm gonna be hanging out here all the time, you know."

"I know," Gertie said, "We'll hang out together here and party and watch movies...and get high."

She'd rolled over on top of me, as we'd been talking. I studied the sharp angles of her face, the classical German beauty of her features, her hard femininity. How long had I been in love with her? How long had I been trying to get her to go out with me? How long had she evaded the issue? She smiled down at me, pressing the weight of her breasts on my chest.

"Yeah, it's gonna be cool," I said.

Then I leaned up and kissed her once, on the lips. She leaned in and kissed me back and as I was about to put my arms around her, about to kiss her, about to tell her how much I loved her, when the doorbell rang. Gertie rolled off of me and went to answer, sweeping her short blonde hair out of her face. Dave was waiting outside by the door into the lobby of Gertie's building with a pizza box and a case of coke. When she let him in he came bounding into the apartment.

"Did you know that your front door locks from the inside?" he said, opening the pizza box as Gertie went to get plates from the kitchenette.

"Your timing is excellent as always Dave," I said, stubbing out my half-smoked cigarette.

Dave stuck out his chest and put his hands on his hips.

“I always arrive in the nick of time!” he said, in a mock superhero voice. God love him, but Dave’s a fucking asshole at times.

After supper was finished it had started getting seriously dark so Gertie switched on a light while Dave and I hung her curtains. Gertie tried to find something interesting on TV with the rabbit ear antenna, but was unsuccessful. Nobody felt like going to the video store at that point, all of us being tired and sore from the moving. So Gertie put on Oleta Adams’ *Circle Of One*, a nice enough album except that she's always listening to it. Dave went to get his coat, saying to Gertie:

“I got you a little housewarming present.”

He pulled out the quarter ounce we’d bought earlier in the day from Jesus Lizard.

“Excellent!” Gertie said, "Thank you,"

She kissed Dave and hugged him. Dave started rolling a joint while Gertie turned off the lamp and switched on a blacklight. We relaxed like that, smoking up talking and listening to music for most of the night. We worked our way through most of the quarter ounce and Gertie’s record collection that way. Finally around two, with nothing left to drink and so full of dope we were all dead tired, an end to the evening was declared. Gertie pulled the mattress off the box spring so that we all had somewhere to sleep. She unpacked some blankets and lay down on the mattress.

“You guys want one more joint before we go to bed?” Dave asked.

Gertie said no, so Dave and I smoked a thin joint to ourselves and then went to bed.

Something woke me up. I didn't know what. It was twilight, out. Probably close to sunrise. I'd only been asleep for a couple of hours but I was suddenly wide awake, being in a strange place and strange noises waking me up. I lay still and listened for...whatever it was. And I heard it a hissing...a sobbing...gasping noise. There was motion in the corner of my eyes and I turned my head to find out what was going on. Dave was on top of Gertie, both of them naked. Her legs were wrapped around his waist and he was thrusting hard into her. She gasped and sighed again and I realized that it had been the sound of their breathing, of their fucking that I had heard. And the air was thick with the musk of sweat and sex from their bodies. They were oblivious to me, to the fact that I was watching, listening to the wet sounds of their bodies smacking together, to Dave's grunts and Gertie's moans as he thrust inside her. I suddenly felt a rush of things all at once. I felt aroused looking at Gertie in full rapture. I felt like an invader, an intruder, an interloper watching this scene of passion. I felt jealous of Dave, I felt angry at this betrayal, I felt heartbroken and terribly lonely and I felt like a fool. Because suddenly so much seemed to make sense to me. Gertie's evasiveness whenever I tried to get her to go out with me. Dave's absence from classes coinciding with Gertie's disappearances, like that day I'd been supposed to get a ride from her to Jeff's for practice. Dave's almost-constant presence around Gertie except when he'd been going out with Heather. Her anger and pouting hostility towards both Dave and Heather following that night we'd all gone to La Nausée. Dave had been fucking Gertie all this time and quite possibly even while he'd been going out with Heather. Dave, in whom I'd confided my deep, abiding love for Gertie...Dave, who must have been laughing at me, behind his oh-so supportive face. I threw my blankets off, surprising them both and

eliciting a gasp half-sex, half-fright from Gertie. I pulled on my pants and grabbed my jacket.

“Will...” Gertie said.

“What?” I snapped, “You expect me to ask if there’s room for one more?” I pulled on my boots without tying them and slammed out of the apartment. I started walking down the street, down towards Boulevard Perrot and the bridge into Saint Anne’s. It wasn’t long before I heard running footsteps behind me. Dave was there, in his jeans and his boots, bare-chested (no doubt for added dramatic effect). Yeah, I could see what Gertie saw in him. He was hairless, well-developed and quite masculine. I can only imagine how much she liked having him over her and in her. Meanwhile I had no muscle tone, I was potbellied and I’d inherited a Welshman’s wealth of chest hair.

“Will!” Dave called, “Will, come on! Hold up a minute!”

I stopped and turned to face him.

“What?”

“Come on, man! Don’t go like this! Yeah, me and Gertie have been fooling around for a while and yeah, maybe we should have told you, but--”

Dave never got to finish the sentence because I slammed my fist into his face. The move was so instinctual, so unexpected, that it knocked him on his ass. Hell, even I was stunned. I didn’t know where it came from. Fuelled by testosterone from sex and adrenaline from the hit, Dave leapt right back up and hit me back. As I said I have no real muscle tone and Dave works in construction. He knocked me flat and started screaming at me.

“IS THIS HOW YOU WANT IT? IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT? HUH? AFTER ALL I’VE DONE? AFTER HOW LONG WE’VE BEEN FRIENDS?” and as he was yelling, babbling, screaming, he was kicking me unrelentingly.

Finally, he stopped and I got up on my hands and knees. Dave kicked me again, sending me back to the ground. I rolled into a ball and onto my knees, and before he could kick me again I jumped to my feet and grabbed him, kneeing him in the groin. We both fell, scratching and choking each other and we rolled into a ditch by the side of the road. By sheer luck I was on top and I wrestled myself free of him long enough to deliver another punch to his nose. This could quickly turn into a fight for my life and I wanted to get out of there.

“JUST STAY DOWN!” I screamed into his face, “JUST STAY THE FUCK DOWN AND LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE! YOU GO HAVE HER! GO FUCK YOUR WHORE AND LEAVE ME ALONE!”

The wrong choice of words of course, because Dave head-butted me right in the nose. I saw stars for a good while as he threw me off of him and started beating me again. Someone screamed at him to stop and as I started focusing again, I saw Gertie pulling him off of me.

“Leave him alone!” she said, crying, “Leave him alone!”

She looked at me, tearfully.

“Will,” She sobbed, “I’m so sorry...please, Will, you’re my friend. Please still be my friend, please Will, I never meant to hurt you...I just didn’t know what...”

But I stopped listening. I rose to my feet and started running back down the hill, away from her, away from him. Dave was shouting after me and so was Gertie but I couldn’t

hear them. My heart was pounding and my nose and mouth were bleeding. I think my eye was swelling shut, too. But what deafened me to them was no physical injury. My heart was broken and staggering away from them all I could hear was the rush of my pulse and the cruel sounds of passion they had made while fucking.

Julie Kennedy: Punks, Skinheads, and the Pioneer Trail

So, the fucking skins have been at it again. Saint Laurent Boulevard is turning into a war zone. Last weekend Me, Heather, Jeff, Brian and his friend Alec went to Foufounes Électriques. The night before some Aryan Skins were waiting outside Metropolis, Montreal's big dance club and got into a huge fight with a couple of Blacks as they left the club. Some Black kid was hospitalized. And on Saturday when we went, some fuckwad Skin tried to cause shit.

Foufounes Électriques caters to the hardcore Punk and Skinhead movements, with its post-industrial, decrepit décor, large kegs as tables and loud, grating electric music. Where most clubs have a variety of coloured lights and lasers on their dance floor Foufs only has harsh, white strobes and spot lights. Even La Nausée has more varied lighting. Just like La Nausée, Les Foufs is built on the second floor of a converted warehouse. Unlike La Nausée, the stairs into the building are outside and lead up from an alley beyond a small wrought-iron gate to a big, outdoor terrace. Mostly at this time of year the terrace is closed but that night it was warm enough that a few people were braving the outside. This shaven-headed psycho came into the place wearing the usual skinhead uniform of white T-shirt, black jeans with the cuffs rolled over his Doc Martens, white braces, and white laces.

An uneasy truce exists between Punks and Skinheads at Foufounes. It's a neutral zone in the war. We all hang there. We all have to share the same space. The bouncers

are all big fuckers; huge, muscular monsters with one job: Keep The Peace. The MUC sends cops through Foufounes at least twice a night and they're always trying to shut the place down. Any excuse to revoke this joint's liquor license would be seized upon. Why? Because this is where the undesirables hang out: Punks, and Skinheads; the threats to their mundane world.

So, when this crazy skinhead pulled a knife on a Punk who'd jostled him, the bouncers moved really fast. I don't know why this stupid fuck pulled a knife. Heather heard from someone who knows someone at Foufs who says the guy was coked up. Whatever; when he pulled that blade the Punk he was about to cut screamed "SKIN-HEAD!!!" at the top of his lungs. The bouncer working the door took off like a freight train. Everyone got out of his way or was knocked out of his way. The bouncer grabbed the Skinhead by the back of his jeans and T-shirt and hauled him back to the stairs. Jeff and me watched him throw the Skin down the stairs head first. The Skinhead got back up, his face streaming blood and started back up the stairs. He *musta* been coked. The bouncer's fist smashed into the Skin's face, sending him rolling back down the stairs. I didn't see what happened then, because Jeff and Brian wanted us to get back inside and off the balcony. The rest of the Skinheads in the joint were collecting like flies on shit on the balcony, and it was no place for a Punk with half a brain to be. Brian and Alec left just a little while after that. I guess Foufounes isn't exactly what they're into.

A lot of Normals confuse Punks and Skinheads. But, they're totally different. Skinheads are an army of hate, no matter what subculture they belong to; they're all a

bunch of shaven-headed fascists. You can tell what subculture a Skin belongs to, either by the colour of his braces (suspenders), or laces. White laces or braces usually mean White Power Skins, the Aryans, that crowd. Black is usually worn by new recruits, who haven't passed whatever final initiation is required to graduate as a full card-carrying member of a pack. But sometimes black laces are worn by pack leaders, or even by people adopting the Skinhead look and ideal but not associated with any particular group or pack. Red laces can mean Neo-Nazi (usually), or Communist (usually accompanied by some form of the hammer-and-sickle "Worker's Symbol"), Red-Skin, or other Socialist or National Socialist idealist. Blue laces and braces are worn by anarchists and self-proclaimed cop-killers, but here in Montreal they're more likely to be worn by hardcore Quebec Separatist Skinheads, Pro French and Anti-English Skinheads. These last morons will often be heard chanting "Que-bec aux Que-bec-ois!" or "White Pow-er!" even though both "White" and "Power" are English words. Canada Skins wear red or red and white, displaying the Maple Leaf, and although shouting "Proud To Be White", they make a rather nice counter-attack against the Separatist Skins we grow here in Quebec. Yellow is worn by anyone who's done jail-time or is a hardcore psycho anarchist, supposedly into shit like rape, murder, etc. It can, of course, also mean you're anti-Asian. Similarly, Green boots, laces or braces are commonly worn by Environmental Skins or the SHARPs: so-called Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudice.

A SHARP will pick fights with any of the above Skinhead groups, claiming to want to stomp out intolerance. However I've known SHARPs who've gone after the

homeless, hippies, Punks and anyone else who displease them. All in all, Skinheads are a bunch of fucking psychos and a general nuisance.

When you say “Punk”, most people immediately think of tattoos, body piercings, spiky dog collars, British flag t-shirts and of course, the Mohawk. Punks also wear Doc Martens, sometimes with the cuffs rolled over the boots. Some Punks wear makeup. Some don’t. Some are pierced, and some have Mohawks, or really long, spiky hair, some have their hair dyed, some don’t. Some have a full head of hair cut short or all fucked up or completely shaved. (These latter are called Cleanheads, and not to be confused with Skinheads.) Punks mostly wear dirty, faded, ripped or tattered jeans, with the Docs, T-shirts, but some Punks, in the “Vampire Chic” subculture dress really elegantly, making themselves up to look like vampires. Punk clothing can be scary, sexy, slutty, spiteful, or strange, or all of the above, or nothing like it. There are bigots among us, but overall, we Punks don’t discriminate; we hate everyone equally. But even among the Punks there are different Tribes and classes and sub-cultures. It’s all basically a way of not conforming to society while still belonging and fitting in somewhere.

Being Punk is about rejecting Normal societal values, commercialism, materialism, the Social Order, Democracy and Capitalism (most of us are Anarchist or Communist). Being Punk is about being open to strange new ideas and experiences and rejecting the narrow-mindedness of those who came before and those who wander blissfully into the prepackaged life created for them by those who came before them. The shock value of our fucked up appearance is about reflecting society’s ugliness back at it.

We're here to bring out other people's bigotry. Sure, most of the time they see us and hold us in contempt, but we've at least proven, if only to ourselves, that they are complete bigots, little better than the sworn-enemy Skinhead. Being Punk is about wearing the uniform of an individual; taking the Punk Phenomenon and making it reflect your personality, your attitude. It's a philosophy that almost borders on religion. And we do it because it pisses everyone else off, which as far as I know is the cornerstone of all great religions.

Since last weekend things have heated up between Punks and Skins downtown. Heather and Sophie went downtown yesterday after school by bus and Metro and they told me about how they were hassled by Skinheads for most of their Metro ride. Jeff and I want to avoid going into Montreal. Jeff also wants to sniff out gigs for the band. That's why tonight we're going to the Pioneer in Pointe-Claire Village, on the West Island.

The Pioneer's a two-storey tavern done up in dark wood, Western-style. You'd practically expect there to be line-dancing going on but it's a rock bar. There's a stage and a dance floor as well as tables and chairs and a few big booths on the first floor, with the second floor mainly a dining area other than a small dance floor setup. At our usual hangouts, La Nausée and Les Foufounes Électriques, you get gangs of Punks and Skinheads. There's no gang trouble at the Pioneer, and so few Punks that even I have to tone down what I wear. Every once in a while I've seen guys in the Pioneer wearing Hell's Angels jackets. But I think they're there just to show the colours and make their

presence known. I seriously doubt that there's any business going down at the Pioneer. I've never heard of that kind of trouble at the Pi.

So, AC/DC's *You Shook Me* is blasting when me and Jeff come into the Pi. He says Hi to the bouncer, they talk for a bit and I slip past without getting carded. I'm only seventeen, after all. Jeff heads to the bar to order a pitcher and get a message to the manager that he's here so they can talk business. The bar's thinking about giving our band, the Psychic Circus, a gig. Talent scouts usually sniff around the Pi when new acts play. At the very least it leads to gigs downtown. Jeff and I pick a table near the stage and talk about setting up in the space, where we'd want everything to be. Soon enough, the bar's manager comes out and Jeff introduces me both as his girlfriend and the drummer for the band. They talk for a bit and then Jeff goes back to the manager's office to talk business.

Jeff really scared me back in January. He told me what happened the night we all went to La Nausée how he nearly OD'd. I haven't touched heroin since he told me that and I've talked him into putting it down at least for a while, too. And he has. I know we haven't done smack since that last time in January. It was actually a little tough quitting. I mean yeah, I was only doing it once in a while to begin with, but I found myself missing it. No real withdrawal symptoms though, thank God. It's been just under two months now and I feel fine.

So, I have a cigarette and pour myself a second mug of beer from the pitcher and I people-watch for a while. Finally Jeff comes back, smiling.

“We got the gig!” he says.

I get up and hug and kiss him, holding him tightly.

“They had a cancellation,” he says, “And a spot’s opened up for us in a couple of weeks.”

“That’s so great!” I say, “When?”

“Saturday, April Thirteenth,” he says, “And if they like us we’ll get a couple of other dates later in the summer.”

“Excellent.”

I pour him a glass of beer and Jeff orders us some Buffalo wings. Visions of rock stardom fill my head. I can see us in a year or two cutting our first album with an Indie label, opening for one of the big acts, getting a tour of our own at smaller venues...

“He liked our demo so much he wants to pass it to the owner of another bar,” Jeff says, “God, this is so fucking *great!*”

We finish the pitcher and get out of there, taking Jeff’s van back to his place. We wanna celebrate and for us that means going up to his room. Jeff’s parents aren’t home when we get there. We go straight up to his room and lock the door. We’re kissing and climbing on his bed. He lies on top of me and we’re kissing, and he’s grinding into me. We’re both still dressed, but he’s so hard and he’s squeezing my tits and he’s humping me right where I need him. I’m wet already and when after forever he stops and we start getting undressed, I don’t want foreplay. I just want him to fuck me. But Jeff’s kissing

his way down to my pussy. As great as his tongue feels on my clit I pull him back up kissing him.

“Just put it in me,” I tell him, “Put it in me.”

We fuck like animals. I roll on top of him to ride him, sliding him into my cunt while he plays with my tits and my clit. Jeff starts grunting and moaning and I know he’s gonna come but I’m too close to slow down. I don’t want to slow down right now; I just want to come, so I keep riding him and I feel him let go inside me and now he’s screaming a little because it’s so intense for him after he’s come but I keep thrusting because I’m so close, so...fucking...close and he jams his thumb hard against my clit and I’m over the edge and I’m screaming and I keep thrusting him up inside me and fall against him clutching his shoulders because every time I move him into me I come even harder. When I finally stop I have to clench every muscle to keep from moving because if I feel anything, *anything* right now I know I’ll pass out.

So I lay on top of Jeff for a while, feeling the layer of sweat between us. He’s still inside me and it feels good. We talk about the Psychic Circus and how we’re gonna make it big with the band, bullshitting and dreaming, laughing and joking. I roll off of him and we have a cigarette, talking some more, until I feel his come leaking out of me. It feels better if he fucks me without a rubber, and if we go down on each other after fucking we only taste like each other, not like an old bicycle tire. I think my grandmother said it best: fucking with a condom is like taking a bath wearing socks.

After I shower I start feeling horny again. I walk back to Jeff's bedroom and I'm about to suggest that we roll a joint and go get high in his parent's hot tub when I notice that he's taken out his works and he's cooking up a shot. I thought he'd quit. I thought he'd thrown all his gear away.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

"I'm celebrating," He says, "Do you want me to fix you?"

The idea of doing a shot of heroin after so long is both frightening and appealing.

"Jeff, I haven't shot up since January!"

"So you don't want to?"

I look at his arms. I guess I'd never looked for them before, but now I can see that he has a trail of small, infected-looking marks down the inside of his right arm.

"How long have you been using?" I ask, "How long since your last shot? Did you even fucking quit?"

"I've only been doing it once or twice a week," He says.

I feel betrayed. I feel like he's just told me he's been fucking another girl behind my back.

"You told me you were laying off it," I say, crying, "You said you were cutting back! You overdosed in January Jeff! What the fuck?"

"I didn't want to worry you Julie," He tells me, "And I didn't OD. I just went a little too far and had a bad trip from all the different drugs. It was actually a pretty deep experience."

The whole time I've been talking, he's been fixing up his shot, and tying a belt around his arm. He holds the needle up and I think he's about to tell me he'll throw it away if I

want. I think he's about to tell me he's going to quit, here and now. Instead, he looks at me and asks:

“So would you like me to cook you up a shot?”

And I'm crying harder now; crying because I feel like I'm losing Jeff, because he's been lying to me, doing heroin, not telling me...I'm crying because this drug is so evil, so cruel, so wonderful...I'm crying because I feel like I'm losing myself, because I *do* want another shot; I've wanted another shot of heroin since I quit in January. And even as I'm crying, even as I'm hating myself, even as I'm hating Jeff, even as I'm hating the Horse, I'm sitting down next to him and tapping some of the brown powder from the little plastic bag into the spoon and blending it with a little water to cook myself up a shot.

Brian Klein: The Object Of My Desire

I was pretty fucked up back in January. I remember showing up on Sophie's doorstep hysterical, crying and generally freaked out because I'd just spent the night fucking another man. Sophie's roommate, Tanya Heihachi answered the door wearing nothing but a towel. And at the time, I was too fucking confused to even notice.

The reason I went to Sophie is because she's always been so caring, so understanding and sympathetic; I've never known anyone with a problem she's turned away. Even more importantly Sophie has always been open about the fact that she's bisexual. After I'd slept with Alec he'd told me I was really gay and that there was no such thing as bisexuality. I was terrified because I was still attracted to women. I was scared and confused and Sophie helped. Oh God, did she help. We talked for hours that Saturday and she helped me to see that yes I am bi and that there really is such a thing. Then, she made me call Alec and tell him flat out that I was bisexual and that he had to accept my sexuality if he wanted to see me again. It was empowering, it was healing.

As I started hanging out with Sophie and over at Sophie's more often, changing our relationship from one of best buddies to close friends, I saw more of Tanya while I was over at their house...And that's how I slowly realized

- (1) How attractive she was, and
- (2) That I had it hot for Tanya, really, really bad.

I remember one day about three weeks after I'd first gone to see Sophie, I was over at her place waiting for her to get ready. I don't remember where we were going...out somewhere to a movie or something. Anyway, it's not important. I was sitting in the living room watching TV, while Sophie was getting ready. She was showering. Anyway, Tanya came in the front door and took off her coat; this long, expensive winter coat. She checked the bathroom but Sophie was still showering. So she came into the living room, and just flopped down on the sofa next to me. That's when I noticed her, really. She was wearing a pair of tight gray spandex shorts and a matching halter top and she was obviously still sweaty. Her mouth was parted slightly and her eyes were half-lidded.

"I knew I should have showered at the fucking gym." She said to herself.
She sighed and looked over at me.

"Corey...right?"

"Brian,"

"Oh, yeah," Tanya said, "Listen...Brian, can I have a smoke?"

You know, supposedly if you look on the Internet, you can find all kindsa porn. I've seen what they call "smoking" porn, basically nude or seminude women holding or smoking cigarettes or cigars. I never, never got smoking porn until I watched Tanya smoke that cigarette. Any last, lingering doubts I had about whether or not I was still attracted to women dissolved when she took that first haul. Oh, my God, I've never seen anything as sexy as Tanya Heihachi smoking a cigarette. I musta been staring, because she looked at me, smiling almost defiantly.

"What?" she asked.

“Sorry!” I said, “Sorry. I guess...I guess I was staring.”

Oh, yeah, that was a smart thing to say.

“Well, yeah!”

“Sorry,” Quick. Think of something to say, “Yeah well, let’s say I was inspired by your beauty.”

Oh, smooth fucking move, ex-lax.

“More like you were looking for inspiration for later use,” She said, getting off the couch.

Sophie came out of the bathroom in a towel, and called out a “Hi!” to me before heading to her room to get dressed. I watched Tanya slink into the bathroom. In the doorway, she stopped and with her back to me she took off her top. She looked over her shoulder at me.

“Don’t let me keep you up, Brian.” Tanya called, kicking the bathroom door shut. *Damn!* I sat there on the couch, waiting for Sophie, staring at the ceiling and smoking another cigarette and hoping that my hard-on would go away.

Suddenly I was noticing Tanya everywhere; walking into school from the Casgrain Centre, or she’d be at the Munchbox with her friends, or in the student lounge across from the theatre department and even occasionally down in the Oval for a smoke. Tanya is extremely hot. She has an incredible body and she is almost always wearing short skirts and tight sweaters or blouses. When she isn’t it’s pants or jeans so tight they almost look painted on. She never has a panty line and I overheard her tell one of her

girlfriends she only wears panties to bed and the rest of the time if she has underwear on, it's pantyhose. This girl climbed into my head right through my dick, I swear to God!

Alec, of course, thinks the reason I'm attracted to Tanya, is because she's unattainable, and therefore not a threat to my newfound sexuality. He and still hang out and even sleep together. Alec initiated me into the world of anal sex; it hurt like fuck the first couple of times but oh Christ do I come hard with him fucking my ass.

But even though me and Alec have sex sometimes, well often, we're mainly just friends. That was why I wanted to tell him about Tanya. Needless to say his opinion of my feelings for Tanya revolved around his pet theory that I'm gay.

"I'm telling you man," He told me, "If you actually got with her, you wouldn't want her at all and you probably wouldn't even be able get it up." We were in bed together, again, but his attitude wasn't exactly turning me on.

"What's it to you, if I want to fuck her, or not?" I asked him, "You said so yourself, that you're not looking for a boyfriend. So why are you acting like a jealous lover?"

"Because, I know you're not attracted to her."

I sat up, leaning on my elbow. He still didn't believe that I'd hooked up with Sophie's friend Beth a few weeks ago at a party. And if he did believe that I fucked her, he obviously didn't believe I enjoyed it.

"Listen," I said, "Have you ever had sex with a woman?"

"Oh, God, no!"

Alec looked repulsed by the idea. I might have well asked him if he ever ate shit on toast.

“Well I have,” I said, referencing sex with women—not shit on toast, “And I like it.”

“Yeah, Brian, well a lot of gay guys have had sex with women and they all came home for beefcake.”

“Maybe a lot of bisexual guys just stopped fucking women because assholes like you kept pressuring them into giving up women!”

I got out of bed and started getting dressed.

“Brian...what the *fuck* are you doing?”

“I’m leaving; I told you once already that if you can’t accept my sexuality, if you don’t get that I’m bi, then I can’t be with you.”

“Will you come back here?”

“No!” I shouted, “You can call me when you’re ready to accept who I am.”

As I was leaving Alec shouted after me:

“You know maybe you’re a lesbian, ‘cause right now, you’re acting like a real fucking *bitch*!”

Now, Tanya has an on-again, off-again relationship with this guy I know by the name of Keith Fischer. Even before I met Tanya I thought Keith was a total tool. He’s one of these preppy DDO boys, practically wears the white V-neck sweater draped over his shoulders and knotted at his throat. I don’t know why but Tanya hooks up with Keith

whenever she needs a date, a fuck, ego gratification or something expensive that she doesn't want to pay for. Keith is great at spending daddy's money on pieces of ass.

So on Saturday Sophie was having a big party to celebrate turning twenty. I knew Tanya was going to be there, of course. My only problem was it was gonna be an acid party. I don't know how often Tanya gets high, but the last time I did it was the first time I'd fucked Alec. I knew Tanya wasn't seeing Keith at the time, so I was hoping to spend some time with her at Sophie's party. Because I know Keith and because I hang out with Sophie, I have over the last few weeks spent a lot of time around Tanya, getting to know her. And God bless Will, Sophie and Beth. They all take this Human Sexuality class on Thursday mornings. One day after class, they brought in this sex survey assignment they were supposed to complete and we all got stoned (yes, even me) and took the quiz.

QUESTION	ME	TANYA	SOPHIE	WILL	BETH	KEITH
Do you sleep in the nude, or do you wear pyjamas?	Nude	Panties & a T-shirt	Nude	Nude	Nude	Pyjamas
Do you masturbate regularly?	Yes	Every night and morning	Almost constantly	Yes	Yes	Yes
When was the last time you masturbated?	Last night	This morning	Last night	This morning	Today before lunch	Last night
Ever been caught masturbating? By who?	Yes; my sister	Yes; my friend's dad	Yes; everybody!	No	No	Yes; my mom
Ever masturbate while your partner watches?	Yes	Yes	All the time	No	Yes	No

When was your last sexual experience?	Last weekend	No comment	Last night	No comment	Last weekend	2 weeks ago
Ever had sex with a stranger?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Ever had group (3 way or more) sex? If so, what kind of group was it?	Yes; 2 girls and me, and in bed next to another couple	Yes; in bed next to another couple	Yes; Girl-Boy-Girl; Girl-Boy-Boy; Girl, Girl, Girl, and with another Boy-Girl couple	No	Yes; me, another girl, and a guy	No
Ever had a homosexual encounter?	Yes	No	Well, DUH!!!	No	Yes	No
Ever cheat on your partner?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

That little survey generated quite a bit of discussion around the table and afterwards Tanya and me spent a good deal of time just talking. When she left to go to her last class of the day, she said to me:

“You know, Brian you’re not nearly as much of an asshole as I thought you were.”

Saturday I was supposed to go with Sophie downtown to score the acid for the party so I left my parents’ place around noon and bussed from Pierrefonds to Sainte Anne’s. When I got to Sophie’s it was almost two in the afternoon. I had waited forever for the bus and it was just a long, slow bus ride from Hell. Even worse, Sophie and I would have to take another bus, all the way downtown, because there was nobody with a car who could drive us. When I got to Sophie’s she and Will were in the living room

having a cigarette. Will had a black eye; his lips and face were all bruised and swollen and it looked like his nose was broken.

“Jesus Christ, Will!” I said, “What the fuck happened?”

“Life,” Will said.

“He was in a fight,” Sophie said.

“No shit!” I replied.

“With Dave,” Will growled.

“*Holy* shit! Dave?!”

“Yeah,” Will told me, “Let’s not talk about it, okay?”

“No problem,” I said, turning to Sophie, “So...are we still going to score?”

“Actually Bri, if you don’t mind, just Will and I are gonna go.”

“Well, would you mind if I hung out here until you get back?” Sophie shrugged.

“Nobody else will be here, so make yourself at home. You can have something to eat from my cupboard in the kitchen if you want, or from my shelf in the fridge.”

“Where’s everybody else?”

“Tanya’s at a photo shoot and Jessica and Kelley are gone for the weekend.”

“Well, if it’s okay I’ll just stay here and watch some TV.” Sophie and Will left a few minutes later and I was left wondering what the fuck had happened between Dave and him.

A while after they left I started getting antsy. There’s never anything good on TV on a Saturday afternoon so I was wandering from room to room downstairs; from the kitchen to the living room, to the bathroom and to Sophie’s bedroom. She’s the only one

with a bedroom on the ground floor. She had *The Far Side* and *Bloom County* comic anthologies on her bookshelf so I took some out and started flipping through them. But my mind kept wandering back to Tanya and that sex survey we'd taken the other day in the Oval. I kept imagining her laying in bed, wearing nothing but a T-shirt and a pair of panties, touching herself...the image cut so clearly into my head...one hand playing with her breasts through the jersey cotton, the other hand sliding down under the waistband of her underwear...

I found myself upstairs in the doorway of Tanya's bedroom, my heart pounding in my ears. Goddamn, I'm a slave to my dick. Her closet door was open, the laundry hamper half-out of the closet. I was drawn there...an impulse, an urge I couldn't control...I was kneeling by her laundry basket rummaging and there they were...a pair of stretchy black *Calvin Klein* panties, rolled from her legs into an "8" shape of fabric...the crotch delicately stained...I brought them to my face, relishing her musky scent and the texture of the fabric against my skin...Tanya's bed was unmade. Shaking with excitement I undressed and climbed into her bed, feeling the satin sheets against me, smelling her perfume, *Eternity* by Calvin Klein, on the covers. With my left hand I reached down and started pulling on my cock, stroking it. It only took a couple of seconds before my dick was lubricating and I started rubbing the sweet spot under the head of my dick with one finger while pumping myself into my hand. I brought Tanya's panties up to my face, breathing her scent, rubbing them against my cheeks, my lips, my nose...The smell reminded me that her cunt had been right there, pressed against this material the way my face was pressed against it now. I was imagining her lying here

where I'm lying now, caressing herself...her hands busy, the fabric of her panties pulled tight against her sex by her invading fingers...and I started coming...

A wave of absolute terror and panic hit me, when I realized I'd ejaculated all over Tanya's sheets. I sprang out of bed and began desperately pulling my clothes back on. There was a huge, visible wet patch of come on the dark green sheets. I looked around, desperate. Her hair dryer! I plugged it in and put it on full blast, holding it right up against the stain. I watched in relief as it dried and my relief turned to horror as I realized what I'd done. Now, there was a big, milky-white, crusty stain on her sheets!

"Oh, shit!" fuck, there was no time to do anything as desperate as wash them...I made Tanya's bed instead, stripping the bed, adjusting the fitted sheet, then the sheet I'd blown my load on, then her blanket and then her duvet. I was halfway down the stairs, before I realized that Tanya's bed hadn't been made when I got there. I ran back up the stairs, and back into her room. How did it look? How did it look? I tried to remember...tried to put it back the way it was...oh, God, please let that be how the bed looked when I'd gotten here! I left Tanya's room and I was almost back to the first floor, when I heard a key turning in the lock on the front door. I bolted down the rest of the stairs, and ran for the kitchen.

"Hello!" I heard a woman's voice call.

As I started pretending to rummage through Sophie's cupboard, I realized Tanya's panties were still clutched in my hand. I shoved them into my pocket, just as Tanya came into the kitchen.

"Tanya!" I said, a little too shrilly.

“Hey, Brian...what are you doing here?”

“I was supposed to go score with Sophie, for the party tonight,” I said, “But she went with Will and let me hang out.”

Was my face red? Was I sweating? Could she read what I’d just done on my face? Did I smell like come? Could she see her panties wadded up in the pocket of my jeans? I was more paranoid at that moment than I had been that first time I’d gone walking down Ste Catherine’s after fucking Alec.

“Why didn’t you go?”

Because I ended up coming, instead.

“It looks like Will had the shit kicked outta him by Dave Astrid. I think he just wanted to spend some time with a sympathetic friend.”

“I guess there’s a story behind that,”

“I guess,”

Was she staring at me? Trying to determine what my guilty secret was?

“So...how was the photo shoot?” I asked.

Tanya shrugged.

“It was okay,” She said, “Listen, I’m gonna go shower and then go take a nap until the party. If you watch TV or listen to music, do me a favour and keep it down, okay?”

“Yeah; sure,” I said.

And Tanya left for the bathroom, leaving me in the kitchen with her panties in my pocket, wondering whether to be relieved I got away with everything, or terrified that I was about to be exposed as a sick, perverted freak.

Sophie Rosaire: The Acid Party

I swear to God everybody comes to me with their problems; all the time! I don't wanna sound like I'm complaining or anything, because I'm not. But it's like the people I'm friends with even if I'm not really good friends with someone, if they're just somebody I know like, casually? They always seem to come to me if they have to talk about something.

Like Brian. When he slept with Alec and got all freaked out because he didn't know what it meant I was the person he came to. We knew each other because he's a friend of Jeff who's a friend of Pascal, but we were never all that close. Now Brian and me are really great friends and I wouldn't have it any other way. He's not like Pascal, who's like my best friend on the planet, but he's another close guy friend for me to have.

But like, everybody else comes to me with their problems. Friends, ex-boyfriends, ex-girlfriends, and friends of friends...I don't know why. Will came to see me this morning, even.

Last night, it being Friday and all, I had decided to go out. Pretty much everyone else was doing something, even Pascal and Sylvain. So, I went out by myself. I wasn't in the mood to go downtown so instead I went to Annie's. A girl there caught my eye and I spent most of the night trying to get her to come home with me, but it wasn't happening. A couple of guys tried to pick me up, but I'd really wanted to be with a girl

so I ended up going home alone. Around half an hour after I went to bed Tanya came home with someone, probably Keith and her bedroom's right over mine, so I masturbated while listening to them fuck and fell asleep that way.

I'd been out late and I'd been drinking, so when my phone rang at like seven in the morning I was pissed, hung over, sexually frustrated and completely burnt out.

"What?" I asked, picking up the phone.

"I'm sorry," The person on the other end said, "I'll call back later. Nevermind."

"Will?" I asked, cause like, I thought I recognized his voice.

"Yeah," I could tell he was or he had been crying.

"Will, what's wrong?"

"I need to see you," He said, "I need to talk to you."

I sat up, groping for my cigarettes as he started crying.

"Come on over." I said, "I'll get up."

Tanya was in the kitchen with Keith when I came in.

"Hey, guys." I said, "Will's coming over, in a few minutes."

"We're leaving soon anyway," Tanya said, "I have a photo shoot this morning."

"Cool," I said. I started making coffee.

When Will came over a bit after Tanya left, he looked like shit. His right eye was swollen shut and was purple and red. His nose looked like it had been broken. Blood

crusted on his mouth where the bottom lip was swelled up and split. His shirt and jacket were both dirty and torn.

“Jesus, Will” He started crying and I took him inside and into the kitchen. I fixed him coffee and he lit up a smoke. And he told me what happened: how he’d been over helping Gertie move into her new place with Dave. How, in the middle of the night, he got woken up by Dave and Gertie having sex. He told me how he’d left and ended up in a fight, getting his ass kicked by Dave. I thought what they’d done was low; Dave’s supposed to be like, Will’s best friend. So, he totally knows that Will’s got a crush on Gertie. And, Will’s told Gertie how he feels about her. I’m not saying Dave and Gertie can’t fuck each other, but they could at least be cool enough to not do it right in front of Will, like that.

“I can’t believe they did that,” I told him, “I mean that’s shit. I don’t think what you did, punching Dave like that was too smart; I mean, definitely you don’t need assholes like them as friends, but you shouldn’t have punched Dave out like that. I can understand why you did it, though. Dave is a fucking jerk.”

In fact, while he had been going out with Heather, Dave had *still* been fucking Gertie. She told me how they broke up: how she went over to his house one night and he was upstairs in his room, fucking Gertie. He actually asked her if she wanted to join in. Fucking asshole.

“Will, you just have to forget about them. They’re shit and don’t deserve your friendship.”

“I know,” Will said, “But right now? All I want to do is go to sleep. Can I go like, take a nap?”

I was still pretty fucking tired, too.

“Sure,” I said, “Come on. Let’s go lie down.”

We went back to my room and Will kicked off his boots and climbed into bed, facing the wall.

“Will, you should at least get down to your underwear. You’ll be more comfortable and I’m not gonna rape you, or anything.”

Will took off his shirt and jeans, leaving on his shorts and t-shirt. He rolled back to face the wall, again. I stripped down to my panties and my tank top and climbed in and spooned him.

“I don’t get it,” He said, “Yesterday...last night...Dave and Gertie were my friends and part of my life...now...”

“I know Will,” I told him, hugging him, “I know. But it’ll be okay. You don’t need assholes like that. Come on. Try to get some sleep.”

I cuddled him as he sobbed a little; not crying, just sniffing really. I could kinda understand why. He’d been in love with Gertie. That shit is one of the reasons I try to avoid falling in love. It’s all just such bullshit.

We woke up around noon when the phone started ringing again. It was Brian, calling me to tell me he was coming over. I only thought about it after I hung up: that me and Brian were supposed to go downtown to get the acid for tonight’s party. Will and I got up and got dressed; I found Will a t-shirt he could wear instead of his dirty and ripped one and then we had breakfast: Eggo blueberry waffles and more coffee. He was still depressed but at least now he wasn’t as upset, anymore.

“You wanna come with me today?” I asked, “Brian and I are going downtown to score the ‘cid for tonight. If you want I could ask Brian to not come and just you and me will go.”

“Yeah,” Will said, “I think I’d like it better just you and me. I’d rather only we went, if it isn’t too much to ask.”

“Cool,” I said, “Bri hates taking the bus and so I don’t think he’ll mind just hanging out here.”

It turned out Brian was cool with it. Will didn’t want Brian knowing what had happened, but we had to tell him something, so I told Brian that Dave and Will had a fight and that just me and Will were gonna go downtown. Bri didn’t mind at all.

“Would you mind if I hung out here until you get back?” he asked.
I didn’t mind, if he didn’t.

“Nobody else will be here,” I said, “Tanya’s at a shoot and Jessica and Rachael are gone for the weekend.”

“That’s okay; I’ll just chill out and watch some TV.” Brian said.

To get downtown from Sainte Anne’s without a car you really only have two choices: The bus, or the commuter train. The train is expensive; well it costs more than the bus and takes just as long and on Saturdays it doesn’t run all that often. The bus stop for the #211 nearest my house is by Abbott, but I felt like taking a walk so we actually went out to the train station, which is on the other side of Sainte Anne’s next to the bridge leading Highway 20 off the Island of Montreal. We walked along the main drag, which

passes out beyond the Quai Sera, looping under the bridge along the canal and then past a small factory and then there's the bus station. The bus itself takes a more direct route into town, but the walking way is nicer because it's along the water mostly. I wanted to get out and walk a bit, to give Will a chance to clear his head and cheer up a bit. It was a nice enough day: not yet Spring but not freezing cold, either. The sun was out, the snow was melting and the birds were actually starting to come out. Late afternoon in Saint Anne's in early Spring is a nice time. We talked and joked, had a couple of cigarettes and when we got to the bus stop it was deserted. The train station is on an overpass above the bus stop, which sits at the end of a small parking lot overlooking the road between Highway 20 and the Trans-Canada. Other than a couple of cars, we had the place to ourselves.

"So..." I asked Will, "How you doin'?"

"I'll survive," He said, bitterly.

"Will! Come on!" I said, "You're the lead singer in a rock band! Girls'll be throwing their panties at you! When's your first gig?"

"Next Saturday,"

"Look at me?" he did, his long hair falling in his face. I brushed it out of the way. Even with one eye swelling shut, his sexy, deep brown eyes were shining through. He'd let his beard grow in too thick and it didn't suit him. But looking at him, light brown hair...those eyes...with the right haircut and a shave, even though he was a bit chunky, he'd be gorgeous.

“You know what we’re gonna do, Will?” I asked him, “Tomorrow, after the party? I’m gonna give you a makeover. You’re gonna be Will, the supersexy lead singer of the Psychic Circus!”

Will smiled. That’s what I’d wanted to see.

“Let’s have a smoke to celebrate!” I said, pulling out my cigarettes.

"Let's smoke up instead," he said. He pulled his hand out of his pocket. He had a Ziploc bag with four small foil-wrapped lumps inside: the last of the quarter ounce that Dave had bought the day before.

"Coo-el!" I said.

The trip downtown took just over an hour. We both needed a butt when we got there, so we lit up just outside Lionel Groulx Metro and I called my guy. He said to meet him at Angrignon Metro station so Will and I got on the green line towards Angrignon. I called him when we got there and we met him in the park behind the station. He gave me a ragged strip of blotter paper, printed on one side in yellow and black with UFOs, ring-planets, rocket ships and alien heads. Space Language. Twenty-five hits of the best acid money could buy. He had some mushrooms to sell, too, so I bought me and Will each a gram, which we ate right there. It was getting cloudy and dark out, so we only stayed long enough to have a cigarette with my guy, before taking the metro back to Lionel Groulx and the next #211 back to Saint Anne’s.

If I wanted to cheer Will up, I succeeded. I’m always a cheery person, even when I’m in a bad mood people tell me how happy I am. It’s fucked up, I know. But, I was

contagious or something, because Will was in a pretty good mood when we met up with my guy and he was smiling on his own by the time we left. Okay, well, that might have been the 'shrooms. Between hanging out for the three hours it took to get from downtown and back and the mushrooms kicking in big time by the time the bus got to Dorval (giving us the laughies so bad the bus driver yelled at us), when we got back to my place everything was all good with Will, again.

Brian and Tanya had done wonders while me and Will were gone. They'd ordered four jumbo pizzas and organized everything for the party. Brian wasn't sure, he said, that he wanted to do acid tonight, so he pretty much volunteered to be our babysitter. When you have eight or ten people on acid it's always a good idea to have like, one person who isn't to keep an eye on everyone else. Brian still wanted to get high for a change, so he would be smoking up, he said. Heather came over with some hash brownies she'd made. There was a surplus, or something, of hashish going around these days. Dealers were selling it for three grams for twenty five bucks, five for forty and a quarter ounce for fifty. Weed cost fifteen to twenty bucks a gram, but there was so much hash these days the dealers couldn't give it away. Pascal, Sylvain and Beth--of all people--showed up with a small keg of beer. Jeff and Julie showed up last; both of them were all quiet and tired. They'd brought over a quarter ounce of weed and with Will's stolen stash we had a total of ten grams of weed, hash brownies, a keg of beer and twenty-five hits of LSD. All in all everyone's contributions to my Saint Patrick's Day / birthday party meant that we were all well on our way for an evening of serious recreational drug abuse.

We'd all done one or two hits of acid and by nine we were right at that beautiful plateau where you're really awake, really stoned and everything has that dreamlike surrealism that's so cool about acid. Everybody seemed to be talking really, really loud. It was like we were about forty people instead of ten and I kept seeing a neon-blue glow in the shadows under the furniture. Out of the corner of my eye, Heather's head looked gigantic, unless I turned to look at her...time was fucked up...minutes stretched on and on...hours past in a second. At one point after we ate, Tanya and I grabbed everybody's plates and brought them into the kitchen. We did dishes, talked, cut up Heather's brownies and brought out pieces for everybody. We were gone less than five minutes and it felt like an hour. Acid does that. It also makes watching TV or movies impossible. With a short attention span, time distortion and hallucinogenic experiences, even a movie you've seen a million times becomes completely incomprehensible.

Will and Jeff are both big Star Wars fans. Or is it Star Trek? The one where they fight with laser swords? Anyway...Will hasn't done acid that often, and he thought it would be cool to watch the one where the guy finds out Darth Vader's his father, on acid, so Jeff had rented it. I don't know how long they sat there trying to make sense of the movie. I remember coming in and out of the living room like a hundred times...first Darth Vader was on this ship and the next time there was this snowstorm and then these giant robots...the next time I came into the living room Darth Vader was chasing people in his big ship through all these meteors and then Will got up, leaving the living room.

“I can’t believe this is the same fucking movie!” he said, laughing, “It doesn’t even make sense!”

He left, going through the kitchen and into the back yard. Jeff shut the tape off. Everyone was just talking; Pascal was drawing really fucked up shit on a pad of paper; Jeff started rolling a joint, Brian and Tanya were sitting on the stairs talking, both of them getting kinda touchy-feely. Brian had ended up doing a half-hit of acid at Tanya’s insistence. Heather and Julie were in my room with the black light on, smoking and listening to Pink Floyd’s *A Saucerful of Secrets*. I lit up a cigarette and lay down on my bed between them. It didn’t even occur to me to wonder where Beth and Sylvain were until I heard the sound of fucking coming from upstairs, just over the Floyd. Heather and Julie didn’t even seem to notice. Sylvain’s a pretty good lover and I have to say that listening to Beth make fuck noises was getting to me. I was very aware of the warm bodies to either side of me on my bed, the tingling in my pussy and then that *twinge*...I had to get outta there. I toyed with the idea of going upstairs and seeing if there was room for one more or maybe seeing if Heather and Julie were interested in...no. I decided to go outside, instead. Tanya and Brian were in the kitchen now and the back door was open. I passed them and went right outside.

Will was on the balcony smoking a cigarette. Beth and Sylvain were sitting in lawn chairs out in the small back yard. All three of them were staring up, into the falling snow. I laughed. The whole thing I’d heard upstairs from my room had been a hallucination. But, I was still horny.

“What’s so funny?” Will asked. I looked at him. I saw how again , with a little cutting and a slight perm and with a shave, he’d look a little like Jim Morrison. I saw what he’d look like with Blonde streaks in his hair...he’d look hot.

“Everything’s funny, man!” I said, “Come on. Let’s go back inside.”

“Why?” Will asked, looking back up, into the falling snow, “Have you tried this? It’s like...warp speed.”

I pulled on his arm. He gave a little, taking a couple of steps to keep from overbalancing and looked at me.

“What?”

“Come on,” I said, “Let’s go inside.”

He laughed.

“But why?”

I kissed him. When our lips touched, it felt, like, electric. And when I felt his beard, it was like little fingers tickling me. I kissed him again, with my mouth open, rubbing my hand lightly over his crotch, feeling him getting hard. I squeezed. When we finished kissing, I leaned my forehead against his.

“That’s why,” I said.

Sex on acid is amazing. After I kicked Heather and Julie outta my room and Will rolled a joint for us to smoke after, him and me locked ourselves in my room. We lied down together naked, kissing and running our hands all over each other. Under the blacklight our skin glowed a pale blue and our eyes were a luminous yellow-white. I put on *An American Prayer* on the CD player; it’s Jim Morrison reading his poetry, while the

Doors play in the background. I'm a Doors fanatic. I've read all the biographies and I own almost everything they recorded, including *Weird Scenes Inside the Gold Mine*, a live Vinyl LP that's been out of print for, like, decades. Oliver Stone is supposed to be coming out with a Doors movie soon; I'm dying to see it. I've always wanted to go back in time and fuck Jim Morrison. He's like the sexiest man of the Twentieth Century.

So like, Will and me are lying there touching each other, and it's unreal. I could see a red heat trail on his skin where I had touched him. His hands on me were like fire, leaving my skin cold when they passed. It was all very trippy. My ears kept filling with the hypnotic voice of Jim Morrison, the sounds of the party outside, Will's and my breathing, with little flares of colour and weird moving shadows all around us in the background. When Will's hand touched my pussy, it was like lightning; I could feel it shooting out down to my toes and up to my neck. I was stroking him and it was like holding an electric snake, sparks seeming to run up my arms as he pulsed and throbbed in my hand. I wanted to taste him, I wanted to feel him; I wanted to watch him. Will rolled over on top of me and started kissing his way down my tummy to my pussy, his beard rubbing and scratching between my legs. I felt like the string on a violin, pulled too tight and his head was the bow, making me vibrate with music.

Usually, I like to be on top, or to have it doggie-style. But on acid? When I'm with a guy or a girl, I want the other person on top, when I'm on acid. Will was fucking me and sucking on my nipples, biting my neck, but I was only aware of two things: The sensation of his body on me, in me, pulsing out radiant waves of pleasure and the electric

explosion of colours behind my eyes. I was seeing colours no human eye was ever made to see: electric, radioactive dark and brilliant shades. My body felt so small and so big all at once, it felt like Will was a part of me; that he wasn't even there, that he was all around me and I was just a small thing inside him, that I was consuming him whole, drawing him up into my body. It felt like my legs were melting into his skin where they wrapped around him, like his mouth was inside my breast, inside my neck, like I had the cock and he had the pussy and I wasn't even aware of how good the fucking was until, forever after we started, I was coming hard, and all the colours in my head turned super-white, and I had to open my eyes to keep from going blind, screaming and gasping from the total body orgasm while he kept fucking me faster and faster, harder and harder until he went rigid and then collapsed on top of me.

Will's come glowed radioactive in the condom when we brought it up to the blacklight. We sat fascinated by it for a long time, before remembering we had a joint to smoke.

"That was...that was really far out," Will said, "It was *cosmic*."

"I know," I said, taking my tokes, "You never did sex on acid before?"

Will laughed sheepishly.

"No," he said, "I haven't even had that much sex."

"Maybe we can do something about that."

We'd been in my room forever. As we sat smoking that joint, getting ready to get dressed and return to the party, I realized the time. Jim Morrison hadn't even started reciting *American Night*, yet. My best guess was that we hadn't even been in there forty-

five minutes. In fact, it was probably closer to half an hour. I laughed again. God damn, is acid ever a cool drug.

Jeff McBride: The Gig

I gotta tell you I was pretty freaked out last Saturday, what with Will having gotten his face smashed in and all. I mean, I'm in charge of our band and with Will, our lead singer all fucked up, we wouldn't create much of a first impression. I've been playing in bands since I was 14. I've played bass, electric, acoustic...I've also done a few gigs, before. Pascal was in the last band I was in, The Where's Waldo's, which is why I wanted him on Psychic Circus. He's the one who even came up with our name. But...oh, yeah; gigs. I might not know the music industry all that well, but I know the business well enough to know that with Will's face all fucked up it would not be cool for our first gig.

I'm the band's manager, okay? So like, I needed to know what was goin' on with Will so I could make sure it wasn't goin' to fuck things up for us. So on Monday I was gonna have a talk with Will. Sophie had told me not to worry, that he'd look okay by next Saturday. I trusted her about Will's looks but Will himself, I needed to; like, *talk* to.

Will showed up for school on Monday totally changed. When I saw him in the Oval after my first class I hardly recognized him. I was in line at the counter getting a coffee and some cookies and Will came up to me and said hi. It took me like a full minute almost to know who it was.

“Will!” I said.

I couldn't believe it. His beard was shaved down to just stubble and his hair was cut like Jim Morrison's in that black and white picture by Joel Brodsky. Only Will's hair is dark brown and he's got really light blonde streaks all through it. His eye was still swollen, but it wasn't as bad as when I saw him on Saturday.

"Wow! Far out, Will!" I said, "You look great!"

"Thanks," Will said.

He seemed embarrassed by the compliment.

"Yeah," I said, "Wow. Sophie did a great job with you."

We got our coffee, and went to take a table as far from the speakers as possible. They were blasting George Thorogood and the Destroyers as loud as they could today. Will lit up a smoke and took a long drink out of his black and gray mug. I lit a smoke too and as I breathed out that first haul I looked at him.

"Let's talk business," I said, "We got practice all this week for the Le Chez gig. I need to know a coupla things."

"Sure. Like what?"

"Are you okay to play? I dunno what happened on Saturday, or who fucked you up or what, but is it gonna be a problem? Is it going to affect your performance on Saturday?"

"Whoa Jeff," Will said, "What the fuck, man? You're talking to me like you're my boss."

"Will I'm the band manager," I told him, "Psychic Circus is *my* band. So, yeah, I guess I sorta am your boss. And the problem is, if you or anyone else fucks up the gig, it fucks up the band and we get a bad rep."

“Well I’m fine,” Will said angrily, “I had a fight with Dave, Saturday morning.”

“I hope you kicked his ass,” I said.

A few months back at a party at someone’s place, Will showed up with his friends Dave and Gertie. I thought that Dave and Gertie were like, a couple. But Gertie spent most of the night crawling all over Will too and Dave went off and hit on Julie. When she told him she had a boyfriend and pointed at me he actually made this face and said:

“You gotta be kidding! You deserve better than *that* waster!”

And then he kept it up all night, even hitting on her right the fuck in front of me! When that happened I almost got into a fight against him. Will and Pascal pulled us apart.

“I wish that I could say I did,” Will said, “But Dave got the upper hand and kicked the shit outta me.”

“Too bad,” I said, “But, what was the fight about? What happened?”

Will looked upset, like he didn’t want to tell me. But part of being a good manager, is playing shrink to your talent.

“Will?”

“I helped—me and Dave helped Gertie move into her new place, on Friday,” He told me, “And we crashed there. It’s just this one room job...and...well, I woke up around five in the morning because they were fucking.”

“Holy shit!”

“Yeah. I left and Dave came after me. I smashed him in the face--”

“Good.”

“I smashed him in the face but he got me back, even worse.”

“You okay, now?”

“Yeah, I was really fucked up about it on Saturday, but Sophie cheered me up and then after the party, well things have been cool.”

“You guys hooked up at the party?”

“Not really,” Will said, “She doesn’t want anything serious and she says if we got involved she’d just be a rebound relationship so she thinks we should just enjoy hanging out and fucking each other for a while. Sophie says she’s not gonna let anything get too serious because she doesn’t want to fuck up the friendship.”

“And you’re cool with that?”

“I don’t have much choice,” Will said, “And I guess she’s right. If I do fall for her it would only be because I’m still upset over Gertie and Sophie’s the first person I’ve had sex with since...well, since a long time.”

“Just don’t let Sophie break your heart the way Gertie did,” I said, “Because she’s broken a lotta hearts in the time I’ve known her.”

Will nodded, but there was something noncommittal about his reaction. And speaking of Sophie breaking hearts, I was probably gonna need to have a talk with Pascal, too.

So every night that week, we rehearsed. Pascal had come up with this idea about adding a few tracks to our demo tape and then selling it onstage at the show. He’d designed the cover art for the tape at the party on Saturday and was printing them up at school in his graphic design class. Julie managed to talk her grandfather into giving her some cash from her trust and she paid to have copies of our demo tape made up as both cassettes and CDs. The first side of the tape was all cover songs, and the second side all original material. We were really on our way.

Saturday came, me and Julie waking up early. Well, as early as we could. We'd both shot up a couple of times the day before and we were strung out when my alarm clock went off at eight. We kept hitting the snooze button, I don't know how many times. Finally, my phone started ringing. Julie answered.

"Hi." She said, "No. No, we're not up yet. No, we're going now."

She lit a cigarette and scratched at the scab on the inside of her arm. I was itchy, too; for another shot.

"We're going now!" Julie said, "We loaded the van, last night, and I have my car. I'll pick everybody up and we'll meet Jeff at Le Chez, to set up."

She hung up the phone while I was getting out my works.

"We don't have time to fix," She said, "We have to load up the van and you have to drive me over to my parent's place so I can steal my car."

"There's always time to fix," I said, "Just a small hit."

"No,"

"Come on...just a small one, baby."

"Jeff..."

"Just a small hit," I said, "Come on. You know you want it."

"Just a small hit. Just one; to get us through the day." She sobbed.

"That's my girl."

Julie's parents live in this huge house in Pierrefonds. Her dad's some big shot at an investment company and they make money like you wouldn't believe. Julie went to

an all girl's school for grade school and part of high school and her parents had even decided what CEGEP and University she was going to go to. I'm surprised they didn't arrange her marriage, too. Sometime before the end of Sec Four, Julie snapped. She totally rejected everything her parents stood for, from materialism to social climbing, to filthy capitalist greed and became this hardcore punk chick. She shaved her head into a wide Mohawk, went to school with her uniform all fucked up, got kicked out and sent to Pierrefonds Comprehensive--not exactly one of your finer West Island schools. When she told her parents to fuck Marianapolis and Bishop's University, they sent her to a shrink and even tried to have her committed. I mean, they were fucking pissed! When that didn't work they refused to pay for anything unless she gave in. Instead, Julie went to her grandfather--her dad's dad--and he set up this trust fund for her. He hates his son and helping Julie was as good a way as any to piss him off. Julie gets her school and all that stuff taken care of. She still works, but only to support her non-school stuff, like CDs, cigarette money and going out money. Her grandfather even pays for her clothes. And the trust matures when she's 25 and she'll be like, a millionaire. I don't know how she got her grandpa to pay up for the records, but she did. Musta told him her dad said no, or something.

Anyway, when we got to Julie's she made me park on the street while she snuck up the driveway to get her car. I sat waiting, hoping like Christ she wasn't caught. Finally, her car, a green '83 Pontiac Acadian, rolled out onto the street. She peeled out and I followed her. We met up in the parking lot of the Dunkin' Donuts on Sources.

“Okay,” She said, “I’ll go pick everybody up and we’ll meet you at Le Chez and start setting up.”

We both took the time to get ourselves some coffee and donuts before leaving. I headed out west towards Vaudreuil and Julie went to pick up Pascal and Will.

We set up and did sound checks all afternoon. The manager of the bar was a little pissed because we were late, but he still bought us a pitcher of beer when the sound checks were done. Will’s vocals weren’t as tight as I’d have liked but there were ways he could cheat on the notes he couldn’t hit or hold and we were sticking to songs that were in his range, without too many changes and me and Pascal would be providing backup and even coverup vocals where needed. For our first gig we were playing it safe and only doing cover songs, not any original material. For our next gig though, at the Pioneer, we were totally gonna do some original shit.

When the manager came over with our pitcher, we had a little powwow about what he expected of us; the type of crowd Le Chez had and a few ground rules about drinking and drugs (Drinking okay but don’t get drunk and no drugs in his bar) and what to do if there was a problem with assholes in the audience. The basic speech; me and Pascal had heard it all before, Will and Julie hadn’t. We had three half-hour sets: at ten-thirty, twelve, and one-thirty. We had a dressing room and we were expected to be in it no later than nine. In between sets we were free to be in the bar, but we had to be getting ready before our first set. We left the bar after a final sound check and had supper at a

pizzeria on the other side of the parking lot from Le Chez. Then we went for a pre-show joint in the back of my van.

We opened our first set with *Devil Inside* by INXS, stripping it down for guitar, drums and bass. Most bands these days have a fucking keyboard player but we want to keep the music a little more pure and keyboard players tend to be fucking tools. Anyway, when Will started singing he was really nervous and was really pitchy. But by the time we got through the solo Will was better. We led into *Dancing Days* by Led Zeppelin; Will's falsetto was incredible. EMF's *Unbelievable* was song three, done after introducing ourselves to the audience and doing that pointless chit-chat bullshit. We closed the set with *Blister In The Sun* by the Violent Femmes and a 70s funk-style version of the Doors' *Riders On The Storm*, upped-tempo, lots of distortion pedal on the guitar and reverb on the bass. Pascal did this wicked solo. Right out front the whole time, Sophie, Heather, Brian and Alec were cheering us on.

The whole time we were doing our set I was noticing the audience. They totally were not reacting like I hoped. They only seemed to enjoy like a coupla songs. I kinda felt like Pinky in the opening sequence of *Pink Floyd's The Wall* movie, staring at these fucking zombie fans in the audience. That movie is totally deep, if you're involved in any kinda band. Besides our friends only one girl, this baby-faced big-blue-eyed blond, seemed to really be enjoying herself. She was hanging out near Pascal and it looked like he was all she could see. But the rest of the crowd sucked! When our set ended the stage lights shut down and the dance music started up. Whoever said Disco was dead was

sadly wrong. All this thumpa-thumpa tool music starts going with flashing red and blue lights all over the place. *That's* when the crowd went nuts.

At Le Chez the dance floor is at the back of the club, in front of the stage. On three sides it's surrounded by tables and chairs, with the bar at the back, near the door. There's a barber chair shooter bar in one corner and a pool-table area in the other. The bar's this long L-shaped thing that covers the dark dance bar and the well-lit pool bar area. It goes from like classic western look to 80s new-wave with neon and mirrors like stepping from one universe into another. The coat check is at the entrance along with access to the upper floor, where the dressing room was. Will, Pascal and Julie didn't even say hi to anybody. They just went right upstairs. Not like I can blame them. I stopped at our friends' tables to tell them we'd be back down in a coupla minutes.

"What the fuck is with that crowd?!" Julie asked when I got to the dressing room.

"Is it us?" Will asked, "Is it me?"

"No, it's not you," I said, "It's not us. It's the audience, man. This just isn't our crowd."

"Then, maybe we should change the next set?" Pascal asked, "Give them something they might like?"

"Like what?"

Pascal looked at our playlist, and lit up a smoke.

"This crowd is mostly French," He said, "And I know that lots of French people really like Pink Floyd. We've practiced *The Wall*...Will, can you sing it?"

“No problem,” Will said.

“Then, I think we should open with *The Wall*, instead of the ‘Stones *Honky Tonk Woman*. Then I think we should do *Sweet Child O’ Mine* and then keep the rest as it is.” The rest was Love and Rockets’ *So Alive*, *The Joker* by Steve Miller, and U2’s *With Or Without You*.

“What about our third set?” I asked.

“Tel Quel,” Pascal said, “Tel Quel.”

“I think we should open with the Guns And Roses,” Will said, “It’s a better lead song, especially if we get the light guy to leave the lights off while you start the guitar riff, Pascal and then only bring up the lights when Jeff does the bass.”

“I like it!” I said, nodding my head, “And then we can mellow out with *The Joker*, then do *The Wall*, *So Alive* and then close with *With Or Without You*.” *With Or Without You* is another song Will has to cheat with because he can’t hit those high notes Bono does, but when he sings it he makes the song his own.

A few minutes later we were back in the bar after having given the changes to our set to the right people. We went over to where Sophie, Heather and Brian and Alec were. I think the only people who looked more out of place in this dance club than them, was us. When Pascal came back from the bar with a pitcher of beer for the band, that little blonde girl who’d been checking him out was with him.

“Tu nous introduis pas, Pascal?” Sophie teased, *aren't you going to introduce us?*

“Mais, Oui!” Pascal said, “Guys, this is Noelle.”

“Noella,” The girl corrected, “Hi, guys.” She said, as Pascal told her our names.

“I think you were all really good, before,” She said.

“I’m glad somebody does,” I said, pouring myself a beer.

Noella dragged Pascal off to meet her friends. I sat brooding over the shitty audience and starting to itch for a fix. My works were in the van. I was gonna have to go out and take a dip.

“Julie, wanna help me get something in the van *fixed*?” I asked.

When she looked at me, for just a second I saw such hatred in her eyes. Then it changed to a look of resentment and then resignation and then need.

“Yeah,” She said, “Sure.”

Our second set was only a little better than our first. Our loudest cheers still came from our friends and from Noella’s, who seemed to have become the Official Pascal Lebrun Fan Club. The rest of the audience, French and English kids from the hick towns around the area, just barely tolerated us.

Our last set was by far our best. We opened with Bowie’s *Let’s Dance*, again stripped down for guitar, bass and drums, followed by *Smoke On The Water* by Deep Purple, Simple Minds’ *Don’t You Forget About Me*, Lou Reed’s *Take A Walk On The Wild Side* and then we ended with Peter Frampton’s *Do You Feel Like I Do*, with Pascal doing an extended talking guitar solo and Will doing backup vocals.

It was our first, last and only gig at Le Chez. We didn’t spit on the paycheck, but we didn’t let the door hit us on the ass on the way out, either. Le Chez is a live venue,

but it is primarily a dance club. Its' crowd isn't ready to be a live-act crowd. But at least Pascal made a new friend and it's been a while since he's been with a chick and since Sophie is with Will now it would do Pascal good to stop carrying a torch for her. The Psychic Circus sold six cassettes: one each to Sophie, Heather, Alec, and Brian and one to Noella and her obnoxious, loudmouthed girlfriend. Not the best start to our career but at least the Psychic Circus was officially on our way.