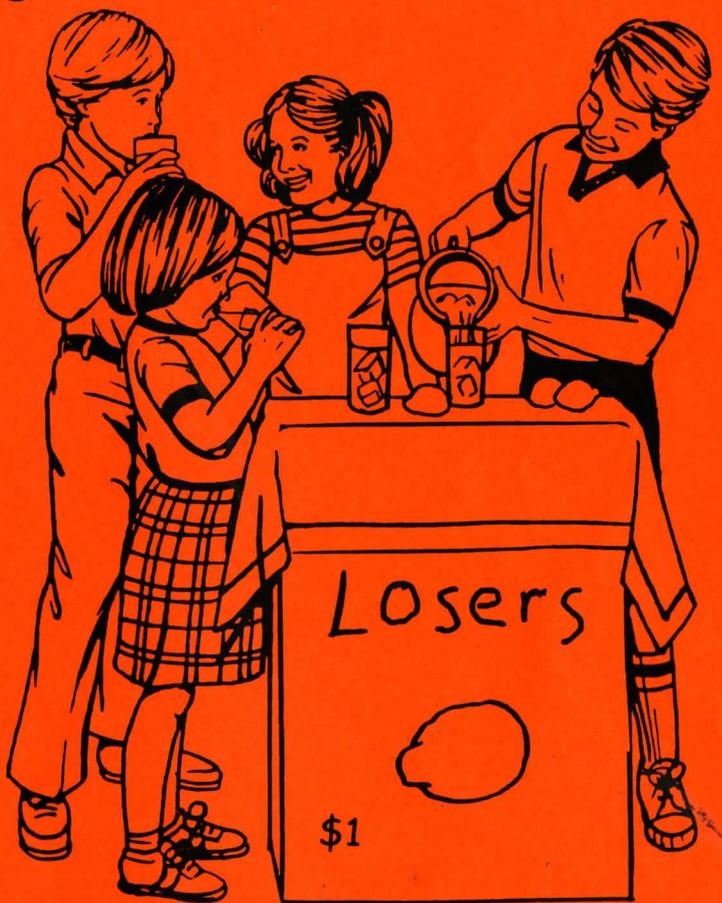


Calder's



the loser issue

cul-de-sac #3

May 1998

published by

Liz Saidel & Julie Halpern

To order more issues or to give us feedback,
write us at:

cul-de-sac

P.O. Box 6074

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-6074

\$2 for first issue ordered, \$1 for each
additional issue

or e-mail us at:

cul-de-sac@prontomail.com



Cole-Slaw-de-Sac for Lunch

Welcome to cul-de-sac issue #3! A lot of people have asked why it took so long to publish again. We mentioned in #2 that Julie was taking a journey to Australia, but that we'd try to see what we could do. That entire time we found it too difficult to put out another issue, even with e-mail and phones. We just can't mesh our psychic membranes unless we're actually in the same hemisphere. But now, six months later, she is home and here we are.

When I told my friends that this was going to be the Loser Issue, the first thing out of their mouths was, "Well then, you'll have no problem." So please suppress the urge to say it. We picked that idea because we know how pathetic people are, including us. Some things bother us more than they probably should, in petty situations we find ourselves reacting too strongly, some interests we have are pitifully sincere. And yet, I believe this cringe-inducing "loserness" is what attracts people to each other. There's an inherent knowledge that on some bare truthful level, there's that pitiful loser inside all of us with a really horrible tape collection. And I love meeting people who admit it. Have fun!

Love, Liz

POO.S. See our table at the Zine Fest '98, May 29th and 30th! It's at Charybdis Multi-Arts Complex, 1750 N. Wolcott, Chicago. Call them at 773-918-8698 for info.



On Chivalry--How NOT to Be Money

by Liz

Intelligent women can't be wooed, they have to be befriended. Several women over the age of sixty have admitted to me that woo-ing is silly. And four out of five female dentists would probably agree. In my high school sophomore health ed class Ms. Bohaboy read us this Dear Abbey article that said, "Love is friendship caught fire." I grooved on that. So gentlemen, if you want to girlfriendsize yourselves, please remember all of the information I am sharing with you.

To illustrate my point, allow me to share a personal experience. One night when I was bartending this Cheeseball asked me out by saying, "I'd like to take you out for a drink." OK guys, WRITE THIS DOWN. THIS WILL BE ON THE QUIZ. What is the difference between a *drink* and *coffee*? A *drink* is juicier, sexier. Too much pressure. But *coffee*, that generally implies caffeinated mental bonding through chit-chat. That's what you want, if you really want to date someone to the extent of a relationship, like adult, intimate, REAL, get to know this person type of thing.

The thing is, I knew all these distinctions at the time, but I was trying to meet more people. I gave him the benefit of the doubt that he was probably not some dork. I thought maybe my restrictions were too tight on these distinctions between coffee, a drink, I mean, they're all just connotations for hanging out, right? He seemed nice, not my style for a date, but hey, it's just a drink. So I went. Now whenever I think about this next part I cringe. A few days later he sent me a thank you card! Ugh! Gross!

OK, calm down. There's treatments for this. So he said he had a good time, who cares?. A thank-you card isn't a COMPLETELY dorky act in itself, but in combination with the woo-ing experience I felt it to be excessively formal, very sort of traversing-across-Thrushcross-Grange-to-reply-to-an-engagement-y. It's not so much that you have to be on the look out for creeps, but for Cheeseballs! I made a plan. I figured we'd hang out one more time, and it would be all casual. I'd nonchalantly drop I was interested in staying single, he'd back off, then maybe nobody would feel stupid. But I'm beginning to learn some people are incapable of being interested in mentally bonding without the actual setting for romantic interlude. With some people, its either A DATE OR WE DON'T HANG OUT. Cheeseball made me dinner, presented me with a gift (a hair clip if you must know--I told everyone I was going through a Courtney Love phase with the cute-sy barrettes, but really I was just fooling myself and trying to make up for a really bad haircut with a little accessorizing). Then he poured me some merlot, put his arm around me, and announced, "I hope this wine is making you giddy." I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP. We all know that women don't put out just because of a free meal, but it wasn't even that. It was more like he was bribing me to *like* him. He must

have been really desperate to try to *drug* me into thinking that he was amiable. The topper was his stirring quote: "What? Oh, I don't read." How many cheesy Feel Good Movies of the Year does one need to watch before they learn gifts Don't Buy Me Love?

So I went to plan B, dropping all nonchalance, and said, "Look, I sense you're courting me and it's making me really uncomfortable. I'm not interested in romance." I delicately avoided the "YOU'RE A BIG DORK" issue. Days later I received a chemically unbalanced letter. Here is a prizewinning moment:

"I have a fever for you. I hope this doesn't seem pushy, but you're worth it. I was hoping for that new tingly feeling with someone new in my life, please reconsider my chances" (Cheeseball).

Ugh! I'm *worth* it?! I am not a test audience for a paper towel! My guy friends actually thought it was funny. They performed different interpretations of this prose, especially when he wrote, "You get my jokes. Your upbeat wit is a good fit to my cynicism." They even choreographed little gestures. Cruel. But Cheesiness is one of the mortal sins, so n'yeh.

Listen. Chivalry is not all that bad. I like flowers or non-rhyming poetry absent of nature imagery. I even like the occasional door opened for me. But no pulling out chairs! Portals only, not furniture. Doors imply a welcoming atmosphere. Chairs are more private. You put your ASS on there for god's sake. Also NOT OK: lingerie and jewelry (too traditional, stinks of "put out now" date-rapey-ness). Well, maybe I might consider one of those silly "Best Friend" ripped in half heart things. I mean, the person you're having sex with should be your best friend, right? RIGHT? (Nod yes.) **Do not** get that wrong on the test.

Its pretty simple really. Don't woo unless you can do it right. Something with thought and consideration. If a guy really wanted to get me gushy he'd see my favorite movie or read my favorite book and discuss them with me. There's no secret that the way to a person's heart is through their interests. That kind of thing says, "I have CONSIDERED your STUFF. Here's my expansion of it." Sure, women are from Venus and men are from Mars, but we're all from the same galaxy.



You Just Roll Over and Turn Out The Lights

By Julie "Forever in Blue Jeans" Halpern

It seems that I am working on a break-up every other issue thing here. I fall in love too damn easily, and, for that matter, people fall in love too easily with me. I have had a "true love" three times in the span of two years, with one still pending in Australia. Therefore, I am becoming increasingly jaded. I feel quite used to the breakup process, so much so that I am going to give you my sure fire ways of getting yourself *out* of relationships. (You know you look lame walking down the street hand in hand, anyway.)

1) End it yourself: You know it's going to happen eventually, so why prolong the agony? Inevitably something is going to bug you so much about this person that the relationship will collapse. Relationships that last are usually based on the amount of tolerance each party is willing to have for one another. Either that or they're too lazy or afraid to get out of it. So here's what you do: start noticing really annoying habits or hobbies or haircuts of the person you are with. Make sure to focus especially hard on these things when you are having sex. Then in a crazed outburst, cry, "I can't take it anymore! I can't stand people that part their hair to the left! I have to break up with you!" They'll probably be too shocked to say anything back, and you can jump your clothes back on for a hasty exit. If they call you to try and patch things up, just make sure to keep a mental picture of that glowing part in their hair, and hopefully you can remain strong.

2) Make them do it: This is fairly easy to do, especially if you are a "difficult person to be with." I have honestly been told by five boyfriends that I'm hard to be with...something about emotional unpredictability. (Wusses.) While that may be somewhat true, I have friends that have put up with me for 20 years, so if some pussy of a guy can't handle it, then they don't deserve to be with me anyway.

This 'difficult'-ness can be used to your advantage when you want out. For those of you who aren't so fortunate to be a little off-balance, try these tips: become increasingly unpredictable in your moods. Most people (especially guys) get thrown when they don't know what's coming. When they offer to make you a Mexican dinner, freak out because you don't like



having gas. Watch *Dead Alive* and cheer at the gore. Then tell them how your last boyfriend/girlfriend got mad at you for trying to reenact the lawnmower scene on them. Be an atheist one day, and the next claim you "Kick ass for The Lord." I guarantee that in no time at all you will be dumped, or at least given the chance to say, "I can't change, so I guess you'll have to dump me." Sometimes this can backfire and bring on sympathy, actually making the relationship better for 24 hours. Don't be fooled by this cheesy, imitation happiness: it won't be around for long. It's best to just end it there.

3) Leave the country (city, state, etc.): This is a great way to end any relationship because most people don't want to deal with the trauma that comes from long-distance relationships. Plus, you can live without the fear of encountering your ex with a new *lover* (a word almost as gross as *panties*). In some cases, you may have no choice in the matter. For example, say I met a great guy in Australia, but I knew I had to leave sometime. This put a huge strain on the relationship resulting in a period of just-friendness. The relationship took on an air of doom, so it was very difficult for the full-on relationship to be carried out. Instead of letting it die slowly, waiting for my departure, I made it easy and left the country earlier than planned. I attempted "the move" after other break-ups because it creates a false sense of "moving on."

Do I believe it is possible to stay in love forever? Is there true love? Does fate exist? Beth wrote me a letter after she saw "Titanic" for the *third time* about how she wanted the romance and excitement of new love. So I told her, honey, in my experience, that shit is over pretty quickly, only leading up to disappointment and resentment because neither of you two are as magical as the other initially thought. I'm not saying this out of bitterness from all of the shafty relationships I have endured; it's just life. Listen to "You Don't Bring Me Flowers"; they don't talk shit.

I guarantee you this: In another eight months time, I'll be retardedly in love again. And I am not looking forward to it.



True Alterna-Loser Stories, But Not In a Cool Beck or Lou Barlow-y Way. Like In a Poseur Way.

by Liz

In the last issue I was talking about wanting to appear “cool.” Well here are some of my attempts IN ACTION! These things may not be alternative now, but being roughly high school age at the time, I was under the impression these things made me a real subcultural wonder. So I figured there’s no better way then to showcase my talents than here.

The Leather Jacket Incident

My sophomore year of high school Julie went with me to buy a leather motorcycle jacket from The Alley. For those of you not in Chicago, The Alley is one of those cheesy stores that sell Lip Service clothing, Manic Panic, plaster gargoyles, band stickers, marijuana leaf patches, and anything else remotely alterna-trend-like. Due to an inadequate amount of gas, we got stranded right off the highway on Addison. When I got home with the jacket, the first thing I did was run my car over it several times in the garage to break it in and accidentally broke all the zippers.

The Seattle Incident

I was on a crowded train coming home from work carrying my roller-blades, because it was raining. I had that cool athletic “whatever” vibe already going on, something you associate with Sunny D commercial “youth” skateboarders, all “Whoa, dude.” Which I hate, as you will see elsewhere this issue. Whatever, just run with me here. I recognize some friend from high school that I’d lost touch with when I went away to school in Oregon, and she recognizes me. We experience a delightful squeal of recognition. We have this pretty captive audience. She announces, “I thought you were still in Seattle!” I was about to say, “Actually it was Oregon” but even people who are only *sort of* hip think of Seattle as being the hippest spot ever, what with major exports like coffee and Sub Pop. So I just go, “Yeah, well, you know,” and tuck my hair behind my ear. Now I am living this big lie.

The “Mixer” Incident

I was at this high school “sociable” (as my dad would say) in the cafeteria and not dancing to any of the songs. That is, except for creating a lame three person “pit” to “Just Like Heaven.” And I don’t even like the Cure (in spite of my hair at the time). It’s just that was the only remotely subcultural song they played.

The Informational Goth Notecard Incident

In all our freshman year classes we had to fill out these little index cards with biographical information. Under “interests” I wrote goth-y things in elaborate



handwriting like candles, incense, the color black, etc. Later I realized I accidentally wrote "rain" twice on my algebra class card.

The Sique Sique Sputnik Incident

Once in eight grade my chorus teacher asked us if there were any songs we'd like to do and I listed a bunch. She told me to put them on a tape. In the mix I added a song by the aforementioned. Was I serious? Like I thought I was cool? Did I want my teacher to think so? Yikes.

The Pen Pal Incident

Once I sent an older penpal a blank tape to tape the Misfits or something. I totally idolized her because she had this massive punk collection and cool hair. She called herself "Zenyatta" because she was a huge early Police fan. I had forgotten to erase the previous recording, which she advertently left at the beginning of the tape. It was of a Canadian pen pal reciting a poem about Corey Hart.

Reoccurring Cool Tune Incidents

Notice how that title was plural. Scary that I haven't outgrown this. When I'm driving I hope that people can hear what I'm listening to in my car. Or if I'm listening to my walkman in public I think that if somebody hears what I'm listening to they'll go, "Wow! Cool music! I'm into that too!" and somehow we become friends. Or maybe people will just go to themselves, *wow, that chick is cool, because her music is so cool.* Though you think that's bad, Julie and I recall driving in my boat of a Z-28 (see **cds #1**) listening to "Enjoy" by the Descendents and cranking the fart noises at red lights.

As much as I love music. if we did away with it we wouldn't have all these problems trying to be part of the music's (sub)culture. Or would we? Maybe it would just be me. Who knows? Pardon me, I have to go put on some clothes and model them in front of the mirror.



Good Will, My Ass

By Julie

I refuse to see the film "Good Will Hunting." I don't care if you think it's good or well-written or whatever because nothing you say could convince me to see those two nasty Lords of the Underworld (not to be confused with The Lord of Dance), Ben Affleck and Matt Damon. Separated, I can barely take them (although, if I was forced to spend the rest of my life on a deserted island with one of them, I would choose Matt Damon. No, it's not because I think he's cuter; there's just something a little less repulsive about him. His hair, perhaps? Either way, the day we land on said island I would throw myself into shark-infested waters, only to be slowly torn limb from limb, watching them bite off my fingers digit by digit, then eating the rest of me away, joint by joint, until it's only my torso and head, waiting for what seems like days for them to finish me off...I'm sure you get the picture.) Let me explain.

Ben Affleck has no right to force his chest into newsstands (see the cover of *GQ*, April 98)! Doesn't anyone care about the children anymore? What could possibly make him a heartthrob? I don't see it. First of all, he can't act for shit. Case in point: "Chasing Amy." Were any of his lines said with realism? It was so forced and memorized, and there is no way in Hell I'd believe that some cutie lesbian is going to turn her world around for *That*. The man can't swear for shit; it sounded like he'd never uttered the word "fuck" in his life (unlike his hottie co-star, Jason Lee). As I always say, never trust a man who can't swear. Plus, I don't get the physical attraction thing at all. Are people just fawning over him because they feel sorry that his little buddy is more attractive than he? It's like that Kirk Cameron/Ralph Macchio period of heartthrobs all over again! You are told they are heartthrobs, but did you ever know anyone that actually thought that?

Matt Damon, while not being nearly as physically repulsive as Afffuckhead, is so generic quarterback.



Can anyone say "date rapist?" He's obviously one of those guys that everybody knows that treated them like shit for no reason when they were kids. Then he became all popular in high school and continued to treat really cool people like shit, and now he gets to pretend he's a nice guy because people are dumb enough to believe anything. Speaking of dumb, it shocks me nil that he dated Claire Danes. (Um, wasn't she, like, 17 at the time?) That may not be date rape, but I believe you would call that *statutory* rape.

Put Matt and Ben together, and it makes me never want to leave my house. But I don't have to! I saw their sorry asses on Oprah (while in Australia! Can't they just let me be?), and it was just like every idiot guy I've ever known was sitting up there for interviews. "Oh, we were so poor that we ate Ramen noodles. Ben slept on my couch. This is like we're in a dream. I don't think I've realized how much has happened. Just being nominated for an Academy award is a dream come true." OK, those aren't exactly quotes, but when you're that generic, who gives a flying fuck what you're saying? The point is: I don't. And you shouldn't either. [Note from Liz: Is that true, the Ramen noodle thing? They've both been in a few movies, especially Matt Damon. How could actors with work be living in poverty?]

What's probably the most nauseating factor in all of this is their "love lives" with Gwyneth Paltrow and Winona Ryder! How lame is it when best friend boys are dating best friend girls? It's so gaggy! I keep having to use exclamation points! But this is an extremely important matter. These two shady characters are bad news. We must stop supporting lame, young actors that would be better off working in movie theaters, not appearing *in* them.



A Mix Tape For You by Liz

My fascination with making mix tapes has hit an all-time high. The creation of the tape is one thing, but the kicker is how I listen to it over and over before I give it to the person. They're all my favorite songs in one place of course. And also, how dumb is this?: I love to listen to all the stupid mini-second samples I put on them from other tapes I have. Three examples off the top of my head are: a) this Smurfs tape that Julie and I loved where this voice at the end of Side A goes, "Now turn the record over, or I'll fall down the hole in the middle." B) this Happy Mondays interview CD that I seemed to repeatedly find a total stitch because I couldn't understand the thick Mancunian accents. I'd "sample" this quote (this is what I think Sean Ryder said): "Bez had four grams o' Coke which'r no good to anyone...Only reason go' out on ba-yul was benefit gig for the 'Ellsbour 'sisaster." I liked this so much I went around imitating it. C) a shitty recording of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* radio show from the library. Blur sampled it, so that I have it in a different context, allowing me to wallow in my delusion that I appear extra electronically wizzy and smart to somebody who might not know about "mixing." I like to listen to tapes thinking about how the person I'm giving it to thinks I'm all sound-engineered out and electronic music-inclined.

But the thing is that my CD-tape deck thing-y doesn't have an equalizing volume for recording, so the samples and the speaking always come out way too soft. Then if you crank up the volume to hear it, the song comes on really loud. It's really a bad scene. In truth I'm not all that mix-board /sound engineerly inclined because I don't know how to use a four track. Or an eight-track for that matter. (Not to be confused with an eight-track cassette player of which my dad installed in various locations about the house.) So the whole thing just narrows down to me pathetically dwelling in my amateurish little mix tapes. But at least I do it right. Every mix tape I've ever received always has "You'll Dance to Anything" by the Dead Milkmen. Hello eighth grade, whatEV-ur!!! And if there's one thing I can't stand, it's when people make me mix tapes and put on like the smash hit single of a band. Then I can tell they're not really into them. Or if they don't write song titles. My boyfriend is a true mix tape entrepreneur. He scans in photos, types out the titles and the artists, has his TV set up through his speakers to tape samples. The only way I'll even top that is if I include surround-smell panoramic cubicles with my tapes. Or maybe 3-D glasses. Whadduyah think?



Do you have a lame tape collection? Not just mix tapes. Real tapes. In a future issue I plan to do a sociological study of people's tape collections. Not CD's or records, just the tapes. Especially the really bad stuff. Send me a list of your collection to our poobox (ha) and any accompanying anecdotes. Thanks!



I Wanna Rock

by Julie

Why is it that whenever a guy walks into a room where there is an instrument, particularly a guitar of sorts, they feel compelled to play it? No matter that they can't play worth a damn; they just need to play. Is it some extension of their manhood for them to be holding a bass? Are they trying to show off what minuscule talents they even have? Do they really *not* want to hear what you have to say that badly that they must have something hands-on to keep them busy? And why is this such a male-dominated habit? I would like to propose something: **Women**, from now on, any time you end up at a house with a bass or guitar or drums, ask, "Can I see that?" and strum or hit or blow away, no matter how much you suck. This could be the type of thing to spark a revolution.

Along these same lines, I want to briefly address the fact that every time I have seen my favorite band, Guided By Voices, Bob Pollard pulls some lame-o guy up on stage to sing with him. So I e-mailed him and told him that that's annoying to a loyal fan like me, and when he comes to Chicago on May 30, will he please give me a chance to sing. So he emailed me back and said this:

yeah...I'll try to let a woman up in the May concert. Even in New York City, I let a guy sing along...I'll do better

Rock on, Bob. I wonder if he'll take me up there. I wonder if the show will go on at all! The Matador website is saying, all of a sudden, that the show is canceled, but the venue knows nothing of this yet. Wouldn't that just be my luck! Bob Pollard would let me sing on stage (You can be damn sure I'm not letting some other woman up on stage!), and they cancel the show. For answers to these and other exciting question, stay tuned for the next issue of **cul-de-sac**.



my sad friend
by julie halpern

This is the story about a friend I used to have called Nell*. It's not really the happiest story, so don't feel like you have to laugh at it. Her story starts a long time before I met her. She was adopted, and her parents ended up having two kids of their own. Nell was a good gymnast but wasn't very bright. She had her ears pinned back in junior high. I met Nell freshman year in study hall. She was just an normal person, but we both watched "Don't Just Sit There" (see **cul-de-sac #2**) which gave us something to gab about. I soon learned how she wanted to break free of the reigns of her evil parents, who seemed to dislike her because she was much prettier than their actual children (my theory). Nell wanted to grow her bangs really long and was attempting to break in her new pair of Converse high tops. I thought she was a poseur, so we never hung out.

Soon after we met, she seemed to go through a Julie-wannabe phase. Now, I am anything but conceited, especially in my high school days, but Liz noted, too that Nell was trying to be like me. Liz and I even wrote her this never-sent letter about what a poseur she was signed--are you ready?-- "Punk Rock Girl and Lord Converse."

Sophomore year, Nell came to school ready for the "Disintegration" tour; her hair was dyed black and bobbed with a black headband, and she had on black shoes with big silver buckles. I began to hate her. Somehow she managed to weasel her way into the punkish/depressed crowd, even though it was an obvious overnight transformation. (It sounds goofy writing this now, since I realize that everyone in high school--even the cool-looking rockers--weren't born with a silver buckle on their shoe.)

This is where things get tricky because somewhere in the next two years, we became friends. She toned down her black on the outside look, started dating this skater boy and got heavily into art classes. That's probably where we re-met. What got me so intrigued by her was her obsessiveness. She talked about her boyfriend, Ed, non-stop and got terrified if she was going to be late to meet him. Whenever Nell tried to hang out, she canceled because Ed wanted to see her. It

*Not her real name. But once my sister and I were playing Categories (where you have to choose a word starting with a given letter on a specific topic, like "food" or "president.") The letter was "N," and the topic

became clear to me that this wasn't the safest relationship for Nell to be in.

Nell became increasingly obsessive during our senior year. It turned out that we saw the same psycho Freudian bitch therapist, and Nell helped me stop seeing the woman when I didn't have the courage to on my own. I tend to form psycho bonds with people; it makes me feel less weird. And in Nell's case, I definitely was closer to "normal" than she was.

Ed dumped Nell so that he could date younger girls, i.e. gullible freshman. Nell lost it. She skipped all of her classes so she could make sure he wasn't talking to anyone else. She started smoking pot because Ed was a dealer; that way she could see him more often. There were countless cat fights where the seemingly harmless Nell would rage out on these tiny frosh until Ed would come in to break it up. Nell was constantly paranoid. Her only focus was Ed.

In some ways, I wanted to help her; but in many ways, I was in it to observe her. If you may recall from **cul-de-sac #2**, I had just spent some time in a mental hospital, and being with Nell was like the good ol' days where I was the kid with the least amount of problems. But it was still sad. I don't want to say everything that happened to Nell because, locally, this story is not exactly a secret. Let's just say that she was treated very badly by a lot of people in a lot of ways.

Helping Nell meant spending time with her. It was nearly impossible to get her to smile. My relationship with her was grating on my relationships with my other friends; nobody wanted to have to hang out with this sad sack. I must have convinced some people because we had a series of "How To Host A Murder" parties, where we all dress up like a character and tried to guess who killed who. I still have all the pictures we took; there Nell is, dressed like a beautiful princess who lost her smile. The only time I remember her laughing was when we rented "Monty Python and the Holy Grail."

Nell got accepted to college on a gymnastics scholarship, four hours away. She drove back home every weekend to see what Ed was up to. You realize that it

was "Halloween Costume." What would you have put? My sister and I both put **Nell Carter**! So we had a laugh but didn't get any points.

Ed is also not Nell's boyfriend's real name.

my sad friend
by julie halpern

was pointless to tell her he done her wrong; she heard nothing negative said about Ed. They were still broken up, and Nell was accepting the idea of dating other people. But she was terrified of Ed finding out. I'm sure he beat the crap out of her form time to time.

Nell called me at school in the middle of the day. It was late fall, I believe. Her plan was to run away--move to Portland where she knew a cute guy in a band whom she met in Hawaii. He told her he'd take care of her. That was all well and good, but what did she mean by running away? Nell told me her master plan of buying a plane ticket, leaving her car somewhere with her wallet and keys left inside, and flying away. I was the only person she told.

It was my fault for letting her be psycho to me for so long. I built up her trust, and I was about to suffer for it. I told her it was a stupid idea, and that if she went she should at least leave a note saying she was going to be fine. I got a whispery message on my answering machine the next day. "I did it. Don't tell anyone."

At the time, I probably laughed. What a dumb ass, I thought. Good luck. A day or two later, I got a call from her parents asking me if I knew where she was. I said no. Then the cops started calling.

I've never been a bad girl. I feared authority and any sort of attention. Positive or negative. Lying to the cops felt really good; it was finally my chance to be a badass.

I was hanging out with my friend Jessica when I got a knock on my door. I told who it was to come in, and this lady and man pig team come busting in. "You should never tell someone to come in without finding out who it is first," the cunt woman cop yells at me. They want me to tell them where Nell is. I keep lying. It's getting harder to do.

In the middle of an art critique, a woman comes into the studio and tells me that there will be an FBI agent waiting for me after class. Fuck.

So I lied to the FBI, and this went on for a couple more days. Of course I must have known



something; I was the only number on their phone bill before she left. Thank you, Nell.

I couldn't sleep for fear of a police person pounding on my door for another interview. The phone ringing made me nervous for fear it was the FBI, or worse: Nell's parents. I hated lying to them, even though they weren't the best parents to her. How would I feel in their situation?

On the last morning, the police called me and threatened that I would be subpoenaed and taken out of finals to testify. It was my first semester in college and I didn't know what to do. I called Nell's parents and, bawling, told her dad I knew where she was.

They sent a policeman over to take me to the station for a full-on interview. I brought a friend with, and we made sure the doors didn't lock on us when we got in the back of the squad car.

The cop was surprisingly nice. They just wanted her safe. He told me amazing stories about serial killers (a fascination of mine) that he dealt with. It was the time when Jeffrey Dahmer was still alive and in jail in Milwaukee (I was in school in Madison.) He told us how when he visited Dahmer the week before, Dahmer had drawn circles around his eyes and mouth with a highlighter marker.

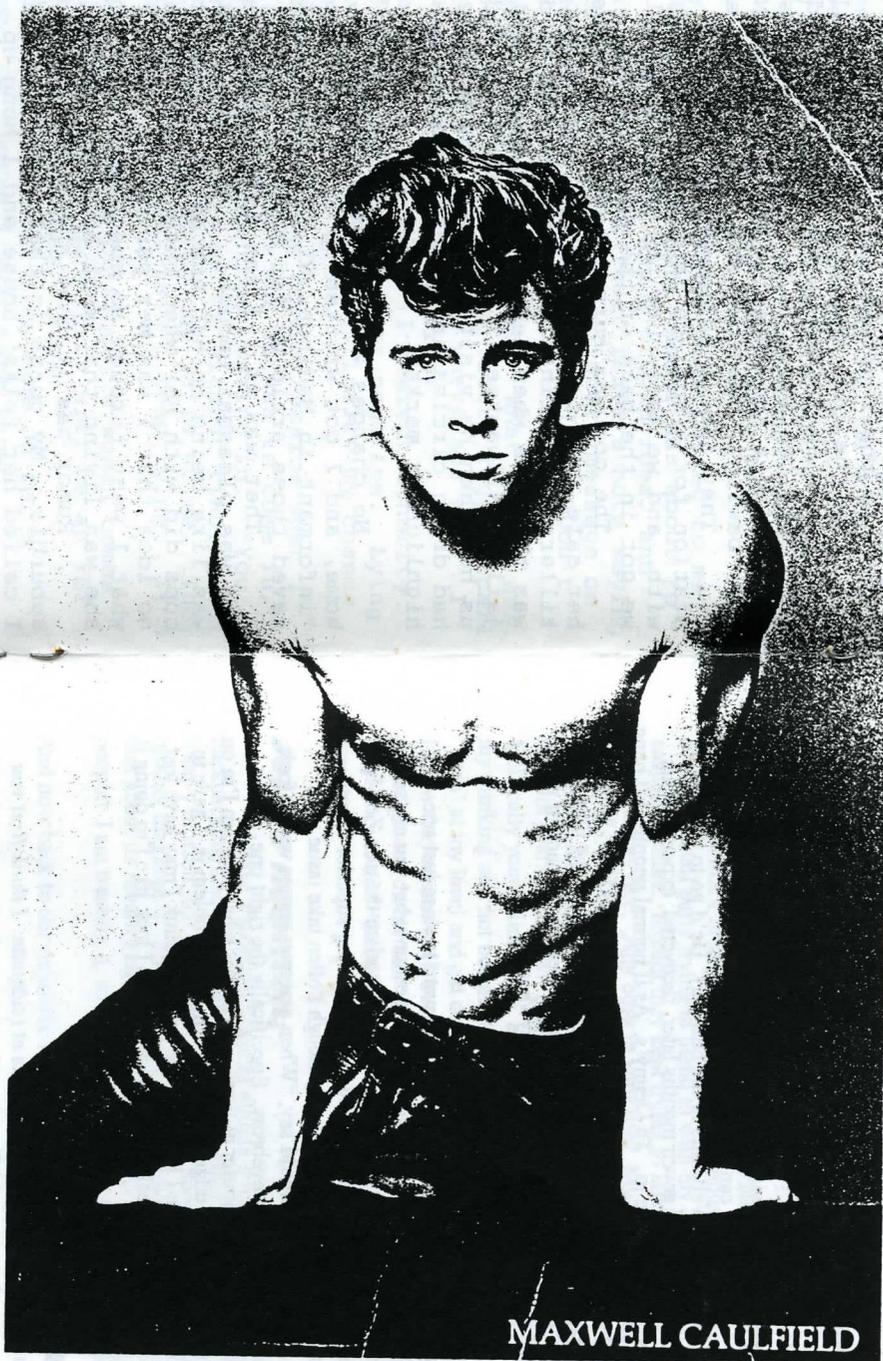
No charges were pressed against me, Nell came home, and I got written up in all the papers as an "informant in Madison, WI." I can't believe no one saved those articles for me!

That was it. I ran into her once at Denny's, and she was pleasant enough. I wanted to ask her what it was like being on her end of the adventure: what the cops did with her when they finished with me. She has no idea that I was her partner in crime for that week, what I went through so she didn't have to live the way she was living that kept her from smiling.

Rumor has it that she's married and living out in suburbia. My guess is that she has a kid or two. Once I called her folks' house and I hung up. I hope they didn't trace the call.



We think it's time they re-release Grease 2.



MAXWELL CAULFIELD

This just in...

LOSER BLURB UPDATE

BY LIZ

We interrupt this issue to bring you some dumb things I must share with you now.

RE: HASH

I had this huge friend in high school that I lost touch with. We'll call him Halfway House. He was one of those people who was always undergoing some kind of "healing process" in a variety of Twelve Step programs. Whether it was AA or NA or Q & A or T+A, whatever, he was always going on about what level he was at. He had the addict personality, I guess. That's the "I could be addicted to anything, but in this situation it is XYZ" type of personality, which I've heard is actually part of the whole Twelve Step schooling. (Like for me, it would be cheese fries.) He was always recovering, rejoining society, then relapsing, etc. The last I heard Halfway House's parents packed him away (at 21? How can your parents pack you away anywhere?) to some posh sanitarium retreat in LA. Well, this is the best part: He'd go to this fancy rock star-esque rehab, then come home seven months later, recovered, expecting this huge welcome at Denny's. He'd parade in. To Denny's. As if normal people still hang out there after high school. WHATEVER. When the novelty of being "clean and sober" wore off and he was no longer the new man on the scene, he'd take a toke off a joint and "relapse." Indeed there is truth in words written in dust on the back of a bus, "It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere."

H-EYEBROW

I'm trying to coordinate my facial motor skills. I want to raise just one eyebrow. It mysteriously communicates the following: "I question what you are saying. I will not verbally argue, for I am too spiritually advanced." I realize the non-Zen-like preoccupation with appearing as such, but it's my way of appearing superior to my co-workers. I don't want to actually talk with them, though I often take issue with lunchroom conversation. As Dr. Laura would say, "When a person argues with a fool, what are they?" So I practice raising my eyebrow. Specifically the right one. I look into the borders of the screen of my computer at work. No matter what program I'm on, there's always some blank space on the edges of the screen. The problem is, I have to have my face really relaxed. By the time I look into the screen, I think I may have lost it, because I'm trying too hard. I can't really see in it at all. Do I look like I'm doing it right now? Pretty highbrow.

BUBBLY BABBLE

There was this dumb lady at this buffet I was at (sidenote: *I think first you should explain what you were doing at a buffet.*—Jonathan) once who I overheard telling this story, like it was the funniest thing ever, "I took the biscuit gravy, thinking it was

oatmeal, but it turned out to be gravy! Ha, ha, ha!!” Why do people announce things like this? To strangers?! That’s so not funny. It’s like a dumb joke Tom Snyder would tell with his huge teeth and weird eyebrows. I hate to say this, but the people I see acting like this are usually people my parents’ age. It’s like they’re more relaxed so they don’t really care what comes out of their mouth, if it makes sense or is even executed well. Is that what I have to look forward to as I mature? I want to be old and wise. I should add that there’s many people *my age* who talk just as much shit. I suppose there’s something commendable about being older and mellow. But not if you laugh at your own jokes. Especially if they’re not funny. Like if you’re just bubbly babbling for the sake of trying to look like an unthreatening “fun team player.”

WHAT YOU KIDS ARE INTO THESE DAYS

While I’m engaged in this sacrilegious not respecting one’s elders tone, I was at this cocktail party trying to blend in with my dad and his friends, trying to look casually mature. Except they kept trying to talk to me about “boys” (not men) and saying things like, “Any boys in your life? My son John is thirty years old! Old city! Right, Liz?” What the hell were they talking about? Why would I want to tell strangers of any age about my love life? And since when is 30 considered old? I’m 24, that’s only six years from now. But *they thought* that I thought thirty was old. So it made me feel really young, immature, and uncomfortable that these people older than I thought my thinking was not beyond the present. It made me cringe that they were trying to be “jivin’ at my level and get down with the youth” so that I would feel more comfortable. I know they meant well, but...Even worse is when I hear older co-workers or teachers try to “groove on my turf” by trying to use what they think is young “cool” lingo. Like they’ll try to add “dude” at the end of something, thinking that I talk like that (which I don’t).

JULIE'S ADDITION:

I have a scorching case of athlete’s foot, probably from all the backpacking/hostel-staying/115 degree weather in Australia. That’s not necessarily loser-y in itself, but I just can’t stop talking about it. First, I had Liz’s doctor-to-be brother diagnose it. Then we went to dinner with one of his friends, and I had to tell him about its severity right at the table. If this isn’t lame enough, I keep showing it to people! I am treating it, so it should go away. But you should see it! Really! It’s nasty!

And now back to our regularly scheduled program.



VAN

By Julie

I just need to say that not every moment of every relationship I have had has been awful. But this is the Loser Issue, and I don't want to waste my lame tales. This particular one focuses not so much on a lame guy but on a lame situation I got myself into. If you agree that rows of bench seats and wood paneling can ruin a mood, read on:

I was working in a video store in the beginning of '97. There I met a soon-to-be boyfriend whom we shall call Video Boy. The reasons behind me liking him in the first place were these; he was a Taurus, and we had both been in mental hospitals. (Now do you realize the extent to which I lack decision-making skills?) It wasn't before long that things began to go the "You are repulsive. Get the fuck out of my face" way, and I soon began eyeing the newly hired Van Boy (not his real name, duh). Our steamy rendezvous began as I caught him dusting the horror section, and I noted what a huge gore fan I was. We both pointed out the classic flick "Freaks," upon which my eyes widened and my knees weakened. (I am kind of obsessed with circuses. OK, REALLY obsessed. It's a little bit freaky. Do you still love me?) It turned out he was planning on making a documentary at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, WI, one of my favorite places on the planet. (For those of you who don't know, Circus World is at the site of the Ringling Brothers' Circus winter home, which has been turned into a museum and also puts on circuses throughout the summer. I have made several films there, and they have an amazing library where they gave me a pair of white gloves and allowed me to thumb through a box full of old freak photos. The town of Baraboo has a cemetery where you can visit the Ringling Brothers' graves, and the town slogan is "Baraboo: a great place to eat, shop, live.")



I managed to break up with Video Boy (on his birthday!) the night before Van Boy and I were to attend our first circus viewing together. I call him Van Boy because we traveled to and from Baraboo in this large, wood-paneled van with three rows of benches set up in the back. Sweet.

As we watched Octavio juggle and jiggle his way around the ring, I casually slipped in to conversation that I had broken up with Video Boy. When Van Boy took me home, he told me that all day he had been anxiously thinking of ways to tell me that he wanted me (which was so obvious in the first place). We fooled around but thought it best to keep it a secret on account of the fact that he still lived with his anorexic ex-girlfriend, and we both still had to work with Video Boy.

How, do you ask, did we keep us a secret? IN THE VAN. Sometimes he visited me at work, and we would make out during my lunch break. On the weekends, we drove out to Circus World and PARKED. (We're not talking about *intercourse*, here. The situation was too funny, and there wasn't enough *emotional* stimulation for that.) I am not proud of the trashiness of this, but it is amusing. Too bad I wasn't really enjoying myself. Without the cerebral part, I tired of it quickly.

The Van Boy escapades ended when, after making out with him in the morning, I attended a show of an ex-boyfriend to try and "win him back," and then went to a bar and ended up meeting a guy who I liked a lot (for a while, anyway). Then I quit my job at the video store because there is just no need to work with two guys that I didn't care to see. Hey, at least I learned *something*: If the van's a-rockin', don't come a-knockin'.



MMMMMM, CHEESE FRIES...

I should probably have titled this "Why I Am No Longer a Small Fry," but I thought you would vomit from the cutesy punniness before the piece even started. And considering that it's about food, I thought that might be unwise.

Some people have some pretty unhealthy vices like smoking or drinking. Mine is Cheese Fries. It's my favorit-est food ever. They're so bad for you, though that's not why I like them. I like them because they taste good. They have the fake cheese, the processed kind they use on movie theater nachos. On fries. I know for those of you reading this in Chicago you know what those are, but it has been my experience people outside the American Midwest are not as familiar. I almost had cardiac arrest when they hadn't heard of them in Oregon where I went to college. (Leave it to me to be the first person to die of heart failure from not enough cholesterol.) When I told people there about them they kept going, "What, you mean like Mozzarella Sticks?" And to this I say, "Mais non! French fries covered with fake cheese."

And it's not like these people wouldn't like it if they tried it. I sampled them for friends not from Chicago, and they loved it. I have this talent for turning people on to weird foods (as opposed to turning them INTO weird foods), often very disgusting ones. The best was taking my British friend to Ed Debevik's for Cheese Fries. He nibbled on one and (I am NOT making this up, I swear) he goes, "Quite jolly good! Pretty obvious really." (Sidenote: yes, he actually said "jolly.") It does strike me odd that the Brits hadn't done the Cheese Fry thing (they'd probably spell it Cheese Fryie), what with their fried breakfasts and fish and chips. Mmm, Cheese Chips. Chyips. Ye Cheese Chyps Crisps. Whatever. Anyway, he came back recently to visit and demanded I take him for cheese



fries. I must marry this man. He loves cheese fries. And he's British. Jolly.

It's gotta be the processed cheese, not real cheese. The real kind just tastes like grease when it's melted. I swear the fake stuff has more taste. Maybe it's all the preservatives. And isn't that just like me? Finding the EVIL YUCKY stuff more appetizing than the healthy GOOD stuff. I think I fancy myself from the wrong side of the tracks because I like junk food. Boo scary. I'm the one your mother warned you about.

I know this is crazy. NO KETCHUP. Well, at least not on the fries with the cheese. I only use ketchup on them if there are a few I come across that don't have cheese on them, and I don't have enough cheese to adequately ration to other fries. I suppose I could ration the cheese to the other fries, but frankly (if I might be so bold) I don't want to share the cheese. I'm concerned with maximizing the taste. Merely having cheese on every fry doesn't necessitate it to be a thoroughly successful cheese fry. It has to be smothered in the stuff. Otherwise, I put the ketchup on it. Sure, then it's not a cheese fry. But I'm willing to forgive that. Because I like fries in any capacity I am willing to endure that situation.

Is it possible to be patriotic about your favorite dish? Because I am. I almost died when I was away at school my freshman year at college, all homesick. We're sitting in someone's dorm room watching "SNL" and there's one of those dumb skits where the Chicago sports coaches or whatever (Da Bears, Da Bulls, Duh Dumbass Not Funny Show) can win five minutes in the, get this, CHEESE FRY BOOTH!!!!!! I almost cried. Vive les pommes des frites avec fromage!



DANCES WITH JEWS

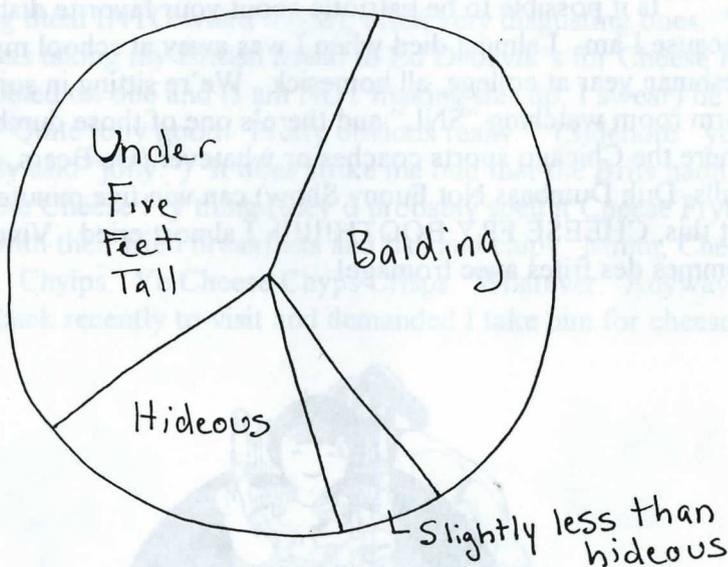
By Julie

At the beginning of October, Beth called me to tell me that her mom would be calling to talk to my mom to convince her to convince me to go to the Post Yom Kippur Twenty-something's Singles Dance, otherwise known as The Matzo Ball. I had no desire to strut my wares at some kosher meat market, but any sort of dancing/dressing up occasion sounds like a hoot to me. I imagine it would be like a bar mitzvah, only where I wasn't related to anyone and there were no white chocolate swans on the tables. Who cares that there would be masses of horny Jewish guys there? It was a dance, and I was ready to don my lipstick and boogie. (Unfortunately, the dance was "dressy casual," which doused my hope of taking advantage of the lovely Homecoming dress selection. I would have said prom, but as you know, Yom Kippur coincides with Homecoming in the fall, while prom is closer to Passover in the spring.)

The night of the dance, Beth was surlier than usual. If she really didn't want to go, I don't understand why she let her parents coerce her into attending this fiasco of a fiesta. But in the end, there we were, two lovely Jewesses ripe for the pickin'.

As we parked, I began to get nervous. At least when you go to bars, it is quite possible that you just want to have a drink and talk with friends. But going to this dance was like wearing a sign that said, "Desperately seeking rich, Jewish man. Looks not important."

Let's lay out the scene statistically:



I hate to say it, but she was right. The only reason I found one boy remotely attractive was because he was wearing snazzy black and white wing tips. Of course, he was balding. I truly don't believe that all the heinosity was just because we were only among Jewish men. They were grody because they were at a singles dance. Come on—if you're in your twenties, should you really be desperate enough to need a singles dance? The cool Jewish guys are out there with the rest of the non-Jewish cool world doing things that cool people do, like knitting themselves new yarmulkes.

Beth was beyond any sort of reasoning. She was spouting such hatred, I could have sworn she had a swastika armband on. (Now she's dating a Jew. Go figure.) I was enjoying myself to the fullest, except for the fact that I was sweating like a pig. Never wear a nylon skirt and a polyester skirt if you are looking for breathability. The DJ was quite good, and I did manage to get Beth out on the floor for the "Grease Mega mix." This Farmer Ted guy danced up next to us and said, "You guys look too cool to be here." "We are," we said. Two points for Beth and Julie.

Not only did this dance have the pick of the litter (dogs, that is), there were also numerous members of our high school class. I bobbed and weaved as Beth tried to make eye contact with them. Strangely, no one recognized me, which made me wonder what it's going to be like at my high school reunion. Why bother looking cute when no one remembers what to compare it with? (Wait. that sounds like I wasn't cute in high school. I was! I just didn't know it then.)

Although neither of us met anyone (probably because we kept giving any guy that came within ten feet a nasty look), the dance can not be written off for everyone. We witnessed a greasy guy go up to a strangely out of place woman in a wacky lime green suit. He told her he liked her outfit, and they were together the rest of the night! Funny—they didn't look Jewish.

I could have danced with Beth all night, but she couldn't stand the pain any longer. As we left, I felt a similar defeat that I felt through most of adolescence: yeah, those guys are dorks, and I am way too cool for them. But if I'm too cool for them, why didn't at least one of them ask me out?



YOM KIPPUR

Spiritual Journey at a Major Purveyor of Electronic Goods

by Liz

The *Celestine Prophecy* fiction series by James Redfield is composed of this fictional Indiana Jones-y quest for these nine spiritual insights in Peru. It's spectacular! I listened to the continuation, *The Tenth Insight* on a tape during a roadtrip with my brother. Now I can't live it down. See, it has all this cheesy music like flutes whenever the protagonist experiences some sort of realization. There's these air-y synthesizers between each chapter to communicate the narrator's excitement. I know saying I like it is like admitting I like ELO or Rush concept albums or something, but I don't care.

Well, I'm waiting in line at a store that for legal reasons we'll call Best Rye. I have to return my bunk hard drive I got the day before. It's three days after Christmas, so the return lines are VERY long. I try to pass time by making pissed off "customer is right" faces and rolling my eyes.

That's when I see on a rack next to me a new Redfield book, *The Celestine Vision: Living the New Spiritual Awareness*. It's the story of the making of the energy or the whatever for his two books in TCP series. To pass time I engross myself in it. It continues topics about how the timing is right for world enlightenment, overcoming power struggles in interpersonal relationships, etc. I was especially consumed by the latter topic, what with watching all the people in line flipping out at the customer service representative. The book continues about uplifting others in groups and how we should try to see the "genius" in people's faces. This is not the first time I have heard something like that alluded to. Once in an airport bookstore I thumbed through the book *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff (It's All Small Stuff)* or something like that. (I have actually heard that quote from Eddie Van Halen.) That author (not Eddie Van Halen, the other guy) wrote that a good way to relax and enjoy life is to imagine that every single person you meet has something to teach you. Maybe these cranky people are supposed to teach me about patience, and that's their own "genius."

I really like this genius-in-the-face thing. I try it on these people in line. It's hard because I'm so cranky and cynical. All these fat, inorganically tanned, dangley-eared housewives, undisciplined kids, businessmen on cell phones bitching about everybody else in line, it's a bad situation. But I try to make myself



patient and "I love these people"-y. Suddenly I find everybody in line, all pissed off, really lovable. I want to stroke their heads and say, "Customer service will be with you shortly, shhh, my love, everything will be OK."

Then something interesting happens: the next lady in line really lets the cashier have it. She explodes, "What the hell's been going on?!"

The cashier responds, "I'm the only one working, ma'am. I'll be with you in a moment."

"Yes, that's the problem!" the woman shouts.

And I think, that is the problem. I have so many overwhelming forces in my life, and I don't stop to learn from them. If I tried to learn from these chaotic forces, I would gain the knowledge to manage them. And I could do so by having compassion for others. And if everybody learned to learn from each other, we'd effectively deal with each other. It is at this moment I emotionally accept that compassion and organization are intertwined.

I'm so engrossed in the book and the people, I don't even notice when it's my turn. I don't have some of the paperwork, but they say it's OK. I bet it was because I wasn't all pissy from waiting. So I don't approach them pissy. Then they don't treat me pissy. The woman tells me to wait while they diagnose my computer's problem. And that's OK, because I'm reading. And guess what? The woman keeps checking in with me as she helps other people in line, even though she's obviously in a horrible mood. She tells me that the tech is still working. I think maybe I see the "genius" in her and somehow I communicate that. It makes her care about me.

Alright this is REALLY cheesy, I know. Sure, there is part of me that is suspicious of how everybody is always like, "You MUST read *The Celestine Prophecy*." I imagine their eyes getting all swirley and then joining some Heaven's Gate Kool-Aid cult. (If that isn't a name for a band...) I agree that cynicism keeps you healthy and discriminative against what can potentially harm you. (A good defense of my rather scathing review of "Independence Day.") But at the same time I think there's something to be said for why a good thing can spread--because it's GOOD. Anyway, I don't feel like this is some cult-y mode I'm in by being so taken by the topics in these books. I feel deep down I have stumbled onto something really good.



BETH + JULIE = DORK

BY JULIE THE DORK

Beth and I have a sordid past when it comes to being lame. The only reason I am writing this is to see if there are others out there like us. And to embarrass Beth.

Freshman year of high school was a period where we were very into making tapes. We made mix tapes, audio tapes of conversations and even video tapes. This is about one of those video tapes.

Lord knows how we came up with this idea, but Beth, another friend named Denelle and I decided to record our version of the "Love Connection". I cannot imagine having this much time on our hands, but we managed costumes, makeup and, very subtly, a plot line.

My sister armed with video camera, we began the show with Denelle playing the host, Rudy Doody. He (we were always dressing up as men) introduced the lovely couple that consisted of Beth as the man, Faggot Green, and me as the woman, Fur Coat. Faggot wore a hat (like a Debbie Gibson style-y hat) and a plaid sports coat. Fur wore a heinous black dress that I had worn to a bar mitzvah, as well as a corsage that we somehow mustered up.

The date went something like this: Faggot and Fur went to dinner and discussed their jobs (hers at Super Maids and his work after completing his degree at DeVry), while the waiter served up dog biscuits. As Faggot walked me to the door, he kept grabbing my ass. Beth was getting a little too into the part. Then the two went dancing, which cannot be explained with words. So order your copy now!

The next date was between me and Denelle. I was Leaf River, a hippie, while she was a nerd with big mom glasses named Cecile Cartwright. Beth played the host this time, Randy Doody, Dandy's brother. Leaf and Cecile's date was dancing to the Doobie Brothers' song "Evil Woman."

I wonder how we ever had the nerve to make these things? I always think of myself as maturing when I got into high school, but it looks like I still had that wonderful kid ability that allows us to not think about why we're doing something or how we're going to look while we're doing it. And I'm not the least bit embarrassed. Probably because you'll never get to see it.



Bargain Brands For Less

By Liz

When I was a kid, my mom insisted on shopping with me at Marshall's and T.J. Max. Almost everything you find there is lame. You actually find something cool, then you pull it out and there's something fucked up about it. You might see the one cool shirt they have, but then you pull it out and it has an embroidered flower patch on the chest and a Members Only button strap on the shoulder.

Occasionally though, you do find a pretty sweet deal. If I need adult clothing, I find gross office stuff there in the Petites section. Usually Petites stuff is really expensive, but here it is reasonably priced. Unfortunately, there are a lot of pleats involved, but that's just the way that stuff is. Pleats are horrid. They remind me of that poor girl in "Welcome to the Dollhouse." Also, Petite clothing is big on the belts, loops, and buttons. Do designers think that women get more into accessorizing the older they get? Vomit.

The one thing the Petites section has going for it besides actual fit is comfort. I found a pair of gray industrial strength work pants, perfect length, and an ELASTIC WASTE. They'd be great with cork-soled shoes. I'd look like a nurse.

Why can't they make Juniors clothes in Petites sizes? Now Juniors, those are the cool clothes. Those tight boobie shirts, cute mini-skirts, the funky pants. But Juniors clothing is made for tall (and often skinny) women. So if and when I do actually find Juniors stuff that fits, like pants for example, I have to get them shortened. It elevates me into "Adult" status in that I have to get them tailored.¹ When I was a kid I hated it when my mom shortened my pants, because she did this THING with the cuffs where they looked really big. She made the seam really thick. The word that immediately comes to mind to describe it is well...*GAY*. As in a synonym for "mel-y."² Like the way we used to say that Brian Smishkie's Sergio Valenti's were *GAY*. Like the way people gossip in some third dimensional valley girl mode going, "HOW *GAY*."

So those are my experiences shopping at bargain brand stores. I'm so excited! In the city they have opened a T.J. Max right across from Marshall's! What with the parking and the Office Depot in the same shopping center, it's a very exciting affair.



¹Tailoring = Adulthood

²As in "MELVIN."

Loser Movie Review: "Independence Day" by Liz

I'm not saying this movie sucks because it's cool to hate Hollywood movies. I'm saying it sucks for reasons I find much more entertaining. Not in that cool kitschy "so bad it's good and therefore John-Waters-y ingenious-y" way either. There's stuff in it that I enjoy hating, as in "so bad it's bad." I actually enjoy pointing it out.

First of all, the film's overlying mode feels very *Look at us, we're American and we're so great, we're going to give ourselves a blowjob* to me. It's the same thing as those Harrison Ford lawyer movies. It's just, well, patriotism is so embarrassing. What was with the patriotic music all the time? During the flights, the speeches, any moment -- they could have showed someone taking a dump and there'd be some national pride hymn piping in. And then there's this array of cultures, people in other countries cheering. As they show each country they're dressed in their respective cultural "uniforms." It reminds me of the end of the second Bill and Ted movie where rock'n'roll sort of "saves the day and unifies" the whole planet. It's so shamefacedly cheesy I am drawn to how awkward it is. Like puberty or something.

And then there's all these bad accents, like it would add some "spice" by making everybody sound different, like Harvey Fierstein did this raspy voice. And then that old Jewish guy accent that Judd Hirsch does. He's intentionally always neurotically throwing in Yiddish. The whole thing with the yarmulkes was the final straw in convincing me that it's rare a Jewish character in a movie is just some sort of "Everyman" (woman?) normal person, not some comic relief stereotype. As his son there's the obligatory Jeff Goldblum chaos-math nerd like he always plays.

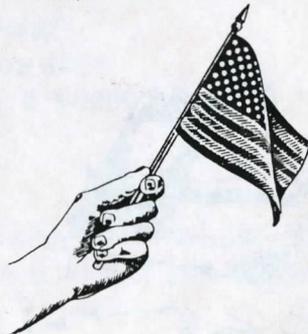
And then there's this whole thing with Bill Pullman and Robert Loggia, where they have the same unnatural gravel-y voice, as if they both had the same shitty acting coach who was like, "If you want to sound official, make your voice sound low and gravel-y." For God's sake,



they shouldn't be in the same scene together! I was expecting there to be some moment where they were both like, "Lookin' good, Mr. President," "Hey, handsome, you're lookin' good," "No, you are," "No, you're lookin' good," "Wait who's talking?" "I'm talking," "No, I'm talking," and so on.

"Independence Day" has a lot of those weird adrenal one-liners scenes. I can't remember any of them right now, but oh, friends, they're in there. I have a sick fascination with scenes like this. Characters say some small witty and inspiring line like "Assimilate this!" right before they go kick the big bad bully's butt. There's this epiphanical moment inspired by some kind of cheesy second wind with the sole intention of getting the viewers to go, "Yeah, yeah!" I wonder if the creators of ego-gratifying movies like this watch it ten years later feeling embarrassed having tried to create these "Now let's kick some ass" moments. If filmmakers make a lot of money on a film do they care about this cringe-ability factor?

In the fore-front of my mind I think a bad movie is so bad it shouldn't have been made. But then somewhere else I'm thinking that I thrive on ripping on it, because I have some harmless place to direct my hatred and mockery. But then again, on some final revenge-fantasy layer, I have this evil side of me that actually wants the movie-makers to hear me making all these comments and be hurt. Hurt as in the way antagonists (evil principles, obnoxious mother-in-laws, authority in general) are in movies when they get the big tell-off from the protagonist, and they're all shocked and upset. Ha, ha. Like at the end of "Making the Grade" when Judd Nelson decides to NOT give the big check to the evil prep school headmaster. Yeah, yeah!



Reading Is Fundamental

By Julie, Library Babe

Being that this is the Loser Issue, I was planning on reviewing the lame-but-entertaining book, *Girl*, by Blake Nelson. Unfortunately, Krista Garcia reviewed it in the last issue of her zine, *The Scaredy-Cat Stalker*. It is my favorite zine, and it seems that every time I think about something to write about, it's in there! Maybe I should just not read it and play dumb when there's a coincidence. Anyway, I guess I will have to go with a book of similar cringe caliber, *The Hottest State*, by none other than Ethan. If you read the last issue of *cul-de-sac*, Liz mentioned my little obsession with Ethan Hawke when "Dead Poet's Society" came out. His character was so pathetic and weak; I just loved him. I even went to go see the extremely forgettable movie "Dad" because Ethan was in it (I wouldn't let anyone come with me because I wanted to cry over him alone--my grandma sat rows in front of me! Damn you, Ethan!) But then I read an interview where he described Todd (*DPS* character) as a wimpy nerd! And I began to realize that Ethan was just this slacker-ass poseur dude who always has to look like shit [especially with that gay, dangley earring--Liz] and be all artsy. So when this book came out, of course I had to read it.

In all truth, I haven't read the book in a while. I do remember being giggly and throwing the book onto the floor when anyone knocked on my bedroom door. The plot is about Ethan (don't even pretend that's not supposed to be you, honey) liking this girl who's not really pretty, so it's like he's some martyr for diggin' on her. It's truly annoying, but it's got funny sex scenes which sells me any day. Plus, you can just picture Ethan as he was writing the book, taking puffs off of Marlboro's, picking at his sparse goatee and nodding repetitively, saying, "yeah." So you might as well read this book. It will take you all of three nights, and then if you ever run into Ethan on the streets of New York with Uma, you can hate him because of *course* he didn't end up with the ugly girl. Assbutt.

By the way--you should write to Krista and get her zine, even though I think she's done writing it for a while: Krista Garcia

5535 n.e. Glisan #5
Portland, OR 97213



WHAM: the zine

If you were lucky, you purchased **cul-de-sac #2** with a **WHAM (Women Happily Advocating Masturbation)** pamphlet inside. **WHAM** has gotten some pretty big attention: We were listed in the college issue of *Rolling Stone Magazine*:

FRINGE- GROUP THEORY

Five Student Societies

WOMEN HAPPILY ADVOCATING MASTURBATION University of Wisconsin Their charter declares, "By advocating masturbation and bringing it to a public sphere, we hope to make it more acceptable." The women of WHAM make their pleasure public every other Sunday at 2 o'clock, often in a city park. Although the demonstrations have stirred trouble, some Wisconsin men report finding it acceptable to watch the meetings through binoculars.

Total bullshit, but I liked the attention. Cheryl, another founding member appeared on the radio a few times, and we were even asked to go on Howard Stern's show!

Since so many people seem interested, I've decided to start a zine entirely devoted to the **WHAM** cause. It'll consist of your stories, comments, and opinions, all about masturbation. Send me anything you like, and I'll probably print it. Depending on how many responses I get and how soon, that's how long it'll take to publish the first issue. Until then, I have a **WHAM** survey that you can get by sending a SASE to **cul-de-sac's** p.o. box. If you didn't get the last issue, or if you just want another excellent **WHAM** pamphlet, same thing.

WHAM

p.o. box 6074

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-6074

Keep on reading **cul-de-sac**! It's my first love, and I won't do **WHAM** unless I get a good response. I can't wait to hear from you!

-Julie

