

1

Sunday, December 11, 1994
2:20 p.m.

Hello test test is anyone there?

Name: Valerie Wilson
Age: 26
Height: 5'5"
Weight: 121 pounds
Rank: knave
serial number:

OK Greg says to quit fooling around now so he can show me something. Ho ho.
On the computer, that is.

*

11:15 p.m.

OK but really.

We just spent the whole day fooling around with this computer and now it's mine. I didn't want it but G. more or less insisted, twist my arm. Didn't want to take it back with him, I'll need it more than him, so on and so forth. So I'm going to record everything here and in a way it will be like sharing it with him. I'm not going to hit the backspace key or anything. Just pour it all out onto the page, spelling grammar who cares. The point is it's a way to feel connected to him.

Still can't understand why he's leaving. How many times the same conversation, offering and being refused, suggesting other ways, night jobs, anything. Will. And always: "I shall *not* be beholden," in his Serious Actor voice but with the eyes to prove he means it. And "Feh!" when I mention Will.

Strange. It's been eight, 9 months and I still know so little about him. (What's with the whole Will thing?) And now committing to go long distance. Some people marry two weeks after meeting. I wonder if G. and I are still strangers or if maybe now we're acquaintances with each other's psyches.

Does anyone really ever know anybody? Maybe it's impossible and doesn't really matter. Feh.

I hate this time of year anyhow, everything all dead and the ground just bleak and naked, no snow to cover it ... exams and presents and manufactured jollity. And now just five days and then he'll be what 200 miles away.

Still. He could be going to New York.

*

12/12, 120

11:40 p.m.

Extremely tired. Came home from rehearsal to find Briana still up and chatty, G. is here, beers all around. Talked about taping a couple of short scenes before he leaves, Briana's auditions -- after that diatribe about Shakespeare being dead now she wants to be in Hamlet, I swear I can't keep up with her, then she's off to bed considerably so G. and I can go to bed too.

G. wants to make lots of tapes, not just with Briana. He's taping me now from the bed. I must look like a zombie here in the dark.

*

12/13, 122
10 p.m.

The agency called. It's all been arranged. I'm going to meet my real parents.

I have a sister who's 18.

2:10 a.m.

How the hell did I get from Mountain Home, Arkansas, to Bill and Marlene in St. Louis?

There's too much in my head.

*

12/14, 120
6 p.m.

Almost slept through the exam. Way too preoccupied to do well anyway: G. is packing, Briana has plans for a party Friday, the school Xmas performance is Sat. Rooth will be in St. Louis and wants to get together. And

And of course there's the matter of Mountain Home. Who are they? What will it be like? An agency rep is going to go with me, just to make it even more weird. Mountain Home looks small on the map. Over 200 miles from St. Louis, how? Bill and Marlene have been there forever. Maybe Judy and Frank -- excuse me, Mom and Dad! -- were in St. Louis once, or something.

Mom and Dad.

I haven't told Briana about this, don't know why. When I first decided she was back in Texas and then I don't know the time just never seemed right ... maybe I need her not to know about it, maybe I need the space. Maybe after I meet them. If all goes well.

If?

A squabble with G. seems minor with all this other stuff going on. I guess it would be fairly minor in any circumstance, but ... I got a card from Will and Jennifer and as expected G. smirked when he saw it. I just casually asked him what was between them anyhow and he laughed and said "oh you know ... if you're the youngest you put up with a lot of s***."

I asked what he meant and he just shook his head not looking at me and went over to the computer (we were here) and began playing with scraps of code, not talking, getting all creepy in that way I can't stand. I went out and sat with Briana watching TV for a while and then G. came out and sat next to me on the sofa and took my hand and squeezed it, hard. At the next convenient moment we slipped away. Why is sex more electric with anger added in? I've never noticed it before but with G. something happens. I can feel the air crackling and taut and his rage is like a conductor and it's all going right up into me. He was snarling. I don't know if I was terrified or enthralled. Maybe both.

Maybe it's all because he's leaving.

4/15, 115
midnight

Greg Giblin is sleeping in my bed for the last time. For a while anyway.

He has very long eyelashes which are red like his hair. Lying on his right side, head resting on his upturned arm, the left hand was over my hip before I scooted away and now dangles on the sheet. His breathing deep, steady, rising falling. The skin of his chest is so smooth.

Tonight he showed me some clips from the past couple of days. It was eerie and beautiful and not for the first time I was thankful to have been admitted into his thoughts. His mind is so amazing. He goes into the reaches few explore ... I have glimpsed a little of what he strives for.

Please. I want him to stay there, sweet sleep. This moment will last with me for a long time.

*

12/17, 118
10:30 a.m.

Ugh. The Advil hasn't kicked in yet.

Last night was a bit too wild. Briana ended up dancing on the kitchen table and nearly broke her ankle when she jumped off. Annie took her to the hospital, the ER guys must see this kind of thing all the time and roll their eyes. Anyhow I spent most of the time sitting on the sofa with a vodka bottle being slightly unsociable, although I talked at length w/Joey about this and that, acting stuff. (what's new?) Anyhow the reason

Briana is so jazzed about this Hamlet is that the new hotshot director-in-residence is doing it trussed up all postmodern, Joey told me her name but obviously I wasn't too impressed because I can't remember. Not my thing.

We also bitched about the schedule for Dirty Work. Was Rickard a genius or what to have the performances 2 weeks after classes start again in January? That's going to be some grind, nothing is ready, big craziness ahead. And Brown is coming to opening night. But maybe everything will turn out OK. Still I think I'm ready to just put my head down and finish up here ... maybe no other productions next semester, just the coursework. I'm feeling ready for something else.

Joey was also trying to pry into me and G., asking what the situation was now that he's gone and so on. I tried to ignore him and not be too flattered, maybe he wasn't coming on to me but it sure seemed like it.

Received a card from G. which he must have put in the mail ahead of time. Simple and sweet. He should be in Nashville tonight.

Now to bustle about backstage at the school ... shaking all those parents' hands and hoping my breath doesn't reek too much of alcohol while they tell me what a good influence I am on little Timmy. Ho ho.

*

12/18, 121
1:30 a.m.

I haven't even packed yet.

Briana is gone, which is sort of a relief ... it's just nice to be alone for a while to catch my breath quietly. I gave her Thy Name is Woman: Shakespeare and the Politics of Gender and Subversion, which sounds godawful but right up her alley if she's going to go for Hamlet. She loved it. And of course lots of chocolate everywhere from and to everyone ... why does Christ being born mean we all eat enough to gain 5 pounds?

Missing G. We talked this morning. He seems OK although a little dazed -- it's finally hitting him that he's there to stay, no coming back after New Year's, no next semester, just a wide open void. It doesn't bother him too much -- he definitely *enjoys* staring into the infinite unknown -- but this particular version is new to him. He's making some tapes so I can see where he is. Maybe I will send him this file on disk ... or just read to him into a cassette. It was strange to think that for now I'll be having a relationship with a largely disembodied voice on the phone. I am going out with a voice. Not at all satisfactory.

So much is going to happen before I next type here. I wish I could take the computer home ... no, I don't want this diary to be too much of a crutch. I'll just write it down the old-fashioned way.

Scared of what's waiting in Mountain Home.

*

January 3, 1995!, 123

10 p.m.

Where do I start?

God.

I can't even write (type?) that any more without feeling sick.

No. I won't give that to them.

God God God God God God God God God God God God

Start with the easy stuff. All seems well here. Briana even has a tan. Rehearsals are better than hoped, long and difficult, which is good in my present state of mind. Two classes and the last throes of the big paper. That's all. Then I'm done.

Focus. Yes. Don't think about all that nasty chaos in the wings ... keep your eye on center stage. G. would want me to watch the wings, but I can't.

Rooth is good too. We talked for a long time. I even told her about them.

No, I just can't do it

*

1/5, 124

10:40 p.m.

G. has a scheme. He's going to work as a film production assistant for whoever's in the area ... he's sending out letters and getting in touch with the local TV people, getting the word out. If it works he'd be on the road most of the time. He's also writing code, something with video. He says it's "our program" although I have no idea what he's talking about ... I just looked over his shoulder. Anyhow. HE sounded good and eager and seems to be out of the funk of Xmas.

He said he's making a lot of tapes. With who? I try not to think like that but I can't help it. It's so easy just to slip down into doubt. I can hear it in his voice too, sometimes he quavers and bristles when Joey comes up or when I mentioned being recklessly drunk the night he left. Of course there is nothing to fear but the fear is there very enticing and easy. It's harder to hear the truth. truth.

Ten days from now the Dirty Work, ha ha, will be over ... it's all looking better, tightening up. Lee is doing amazing things, deeply affecting. I have made it a habit to spend time looking at the statue in the square after rehearsal every night, thinking things over, coming down a bit. Shivering and trying to fathom the origin of hatred.

But it's not hard at all ... I have no farther to look than my own family.

I still haven't told Briana. It's not really something to be proud of.

I can still say that Bill and Marlene are my parents. I was brought up with their way of life, their ideals. Biology means so very little. And yet sometimes I wonder

no not now. too tired

3:30 a.m.

I can't sleep so I'm just having a little drink and finally maybe I can type and face the facts here

3:40 Where is Greg?

3:50 perhaps a game of association would help let my thoughts drift a bit more pleasantly

flower lilies death of christ

no

pizza hunger G. darkness monsters

no

art statues slaves whips flies in wounds

he belted her

right in front of me

slithering out of the loops of his detestable slacks with one jerk of his hand doubling the end back to the buckle and smacking her thighs with the double thickness of leather and the red marks and she's biting down hard on nothing not wanting to give him the satisfaction of a sound

and it is satisfaction oh yes his eyes are hot and moist and his face is ruddy with ardor for the beating those lovely legs she is supposed to be ashamed of

and mother standing by looking her arms tight against her chest dowdy terry bathrobe -- it's 11:30 that's one half hour too late missy where were you?

he's a lawyer and she was a nurse and their house is pretty and our daughter will go to the best college and they hate and hate and hate everyone blacks jews the president somewhere they turned their back on it all decided that God is vengeance not love

they claim to love their daughter but they have killed her I looked at her and saw me saw death in her eyes dead going out with brawny pigs who probably date rape her in the car out by the swamp and then tell her it's her fault for looking so pretty because she is so pretty so frail so crushed and whipped head down clear the table do your chores dutiful daughter preparing to be a dutiful wife counting the cracks on the ceiling is that love?

oh God is this really where I came from?

I could see them appraising me an actor unholy mother said she'd heard all about Hollywood and couldn't say she approved of the lifestyle out there

framed prints of scripture written in bright menacing calligraphy no pets no room to move or breathe statuettes of praying children

they didn't want to talk about me about adoption all they would say is it was back before they'd found the true path before they were married living in St. Louis I guess he went to law school there

and now they beat their daughter for it

and do you go to church Valerie why don't you go to church shaking their heads she is lost, she is doomed

I gave her my address and phone and told her to call I think she understood that I could help

G. met me halfway and I couldn't stop crying lying together on that cheap motel bed halfway from Nashville and crying crying the pillow is damp snot everywhere and he is just listening and holding me watching me cope with the world not being what it seems beauty love underneath it all is hate fear rage

and I know he was watching me he wasn't FEELING IT WITH ME no empathy compassion co-feeling because he already knew and so he was just watching me pushing the limits and stumbling into dark places he's already frequented

god sometimes I wonder

*

1/6, 121

9:46 p.m.

I read over what I wrote/typed and it seems crazy. When I woke up I saw I'd finished off a third of a bottle of whiskey while I was typing. It's true that my birth parents are hateful extremists. Purity is their caged daughter.

The rest was garble.

So tired.

*

1/7, 120

11 a.m.

After all that, this morning who should I get a letter from but Judith Felton, that is, my biological mother? Lined stationery with flowers and big-eyed does and butterflies decorating the margins. I can see her sitting at the kitchen table, her eyes squinting behind those big squared-off glasses and her hair crinkling with

disapproval, lips frowning, for it's surely with a heavy heart that she wrote me ... Purity applied to Ole Miss and wants to see it, and they can't get away, so would I be her escort for the day?

She'll arrive Wednesday evening and leave Thursday afternoon -- the worst possible time for me but I'm so excited! This is my chance to help her get away. To really talk to her. I immediately phoned back and said I would be so happy to help ... trying not to sound too eager ... trying not to be surprised when Frank spouted lines of scripture as he exhorted/warned me to take good care of her. (Judy closed her letter with a passage from Corinthians.)

Other communique of note: Will called. He hasn't heard from Greg for a while and wanted to know if I had any news. We ended up talking for a while. I don't know him well enough to pry into family matters but I want to know what's between them. Will seems perfectly nice, in a safe sort of way. I even told him a little about Mountain Home and he was sympathetic and warm. Why is G. so derisive of him? Will said we should come to California some time and visit. It sounds nice. Maybe on spring break.

I'm feeling refreshed. The path ahead seems a clean bright arrow.

*

1/9, 118
8 a.m.

G. was here. He got here Sat. night. He just dropped in to surprise me.

Love. Joy.

Heaven.

*

1/10, 117
11:40 p.m.

I haven't felt so alive in weeks. G. was amazing.

We talked about Mountain Home a lot or rather I talked and he kept me talking and taped me which felt okay. I was so out there, kind of high and dazed with everything I had seen and the ideas I was trying to grasp.

I mean, what if they hadn't given me up, and that had been my life?

I must be the only person in the world who's thankful to be adopted.

G. will be working this weekend so he wished me luck early. He's got a stint with a documentary team ... they're going out TO Al Gore's hometown. It sounds so good for him and yet I wish sometimes that he were still here. Does that make me selfish?

Too much time mulling things over, too much time in this diary -- I've read it as I scrolled past and the analysis makes me tired. Who am I, Laura Palmer?

I'm feeling so grateful now I am even grateful for these horrific cramps and the bloat. And so I want to be outside gulping down the cold air. And being ready for tomorrow and the play and real life.

*

1/12, 120
2 p.m.

Purity is safely on her way home. Everything is as bad as I suspected.

*

1/15, 117
8 p.m.

I'm going straight to bed after this. I seem to be coming down with a flu.

The play was great. After opening night I met Larry Brown and he complimented me, everyone complimented me every night, Will even called from California. G. sent a telegram. A good writeup in the Eagle and the Jackson papers and even the weekly in Biloxi. Possibilities abound, maybe a tour? after the semester is out.

It was hard work but what is sapping my strength is Purity. The weight of her life is on me, the way her pretty face twisted with tears in the cafe near the bus. SO pretty, so dead, spirit bludgeoned beyond recognition. She just sat twisting her Kleenex around her fingers. She couldn't come out and say anything and she was ashamed to be crying and it was an ugly spiral of a scene.

All of this was learned/taught -- the shame and timidity.

I don't really know what she thought of me or if she ever wants to see me again -- when we dropped by the theater and I gossiped with friends so casually and vulgarly was she shocked and dismayed? Or did it give her hope?

4? a.m.
Oh God oh GOD

belt snapping fists blurred in the air dad is beating beating and I am trying to pull him off her trying to keep him from kicking and mauling with his righteous fury

I am approaching from behind his crisp white button down shirt back is so clean and bright in the dark and her twisted body beyond beneath

and when I wrench him around by the shoulder I can feel the smooth cotton his face is snarling orgasmic with fury and I realize I know that face it's not who it seems it's GREG

*

1/18, 115

3 p.m.

I'm feeling a little better. I've had a fever, terrible fever dreams but especially the one I wrote down, over and over, and by now when the dream starts I know what's going to happen and there's this terror building even as it happens the same as ever.

*

1/19, 117

9:30 p.m.

G. is back in Nashville and well. He said he had a great time on location and wouldn't stop talking about his supervisor, some woman named Louise, and all of the good career advice she gave him. "I don't know if I want to hear this," I joked (sort of joked), and immediately G. said "don't project, Val"

what the hell was that?

I asked him about it and he retracted ... said he missed me, missed my calls. I told him it was difficult with him being gone, and now he's thinking of getting a cellular. I'm still a bit irked. What, am I supposed to trace him? I'm not sure how to respond to this.

A thank-you note from Mountain Home arrived while I was sick. Blessed are the pure of heart and so forth and so on. In gratitude for my stern stewardship, ho ho, they've asked me to come stay with them for a weekend, so we can talk about my salvation. Apparently as things stand now I'm headed for damnation. They don't even know the half of it. How do I turn them down?

Briana is still oblivious, learning Ophelia lines all the time. She thinks Purity is someone from St. Louis. I don't know why I keep lying! Do I even have a right to be morally offended by anything? I have so many petty sins of my own, this little lie and that.

*

1/21, 119

2 p.m.

Fully recovered but still dreaming.

My mail is getting weirder by the minute. I got a letter from Will in CA, I don't know why. It didn't really say much, just sort of friendly, but I found myself pouring everything into the reply I sent. I just let go like I haven't in a while -- the suspicion with G., everything with Purity, classes, Briana and Ophelia.

I get so tired so fast.

A postcard from G. from the Grand Ole Opry with a verse he'd written in country song style -- missin' his baby etc etc

And a little gift from my parents -- a small framed portrait of Christ.

This has all the makings of lunacy. Or a sick miniseries, take your pick.

*

1/22, 120

11 a.m.

After another cast party, this time for Annie who was doing Brian Friel. Guinness, and way too much of it. Pure escapism. Joey asking me to come home with him, why did I see this coming? I said no and he left alone. A very small part of me wanted to go with him and I'm a little scared to admit that ...

admit what? that the physical element matters, not just sexual but the pure comfort of another warm body.

The only thing to do is make like Heloise and channel that energy elsewhere, like how about school? There is a whole act of Marat/Sade to be worked out for Gold's class ... we're all directing collaboratively and it's just chaos. Theory to read, new fun for the kiddies ...

Or Purity. She called yesterday just as I was crafting a gentle "no thanks" note to her parents.

our parents

Are you coming? she said.

Well, I don't know. (fumbling as ever)

I really liked talking with you and I'd like it, she blurted.

I wondered was she alone calling me furtively or was this a staged thing her parents were forcing her into?

Only one way to find out.

I'd love to come, I said. I'll be so glad to see you again.

What have I gotten myself into?

*

1/23, 119

9 p.m.

G. called and said accusingly he'd called before and no one had picked up. He's at home for the moment. He's coming this weekend.

Again not great timing and I guess it's my turn to visit him but it can't be helped. It will be good to talk things over ... he's acting a bit worrisome

Ill will seems to be in the air. Everyone is so rude. In the square tonight a shouting match between a driver and a bicyclist -- harsh language and hostility leaping and arc-ing between them. I doubt it was necessary to use so many obscenities. I'm feeling a bit hypersensitive to all this. noticing all the little slights which snowball into this general lack of integrity and respect.

*

1/24, 119

10 p.m.

I got another letter from Will. He tried so hard to be *with* me, to empathize, put himself in my place and write and ask other questions. He seemed especially interested in Purity and what is happening with her.

He didn't comment much about G. though. I was hoping for more, maybe a little insight into their own story? He did acknowledge that G. is a special case and has a mind of his own, whatever that means. It's nice to know someone who knows G. at least as much as I and understands what I mean.

He's unhappy with his wife. I want to help him like he's helped me -- listen and offer up pure compassion -- but I feel so unsure. What do I know about marriage?

Will seems like the older sibling I've always wished for. What is between him and Greg?

*

1/27

5 p.m.

Getting ready for G. Where will he take me this time?

And for Purity -- I go there next. I have decided that she should go very far away as soon as she can. Graduate high school and run. Maybe Will can help her in California. Ole Miss is too close.

*

1/29, 118

9:20 p.m.

One weird weekend. I think we are okay now

Last night we sat in the square right near the statue and talked and it all came out. At one point we were both shouting at each other both in pure fear and suspicion -- I think I was asking "WHO IS LOUISE?" and he was saying "WHAT ABOUT JOEY?" and then just silence and then he just held my face in his hands and hissed, "God, you're everything to me, don't you understand?" and I realized he was on the verge of tears.

I have *never* seen him like that, never vulnerable -- he's always just been watching me from the outside -- but this time he was there with me, and even though it wasn't a happy place I felt grateful for something, that we were together maybe? We were just crying together for a while, feeling so horrible that we could feel so much for each other and still fall prey to obsessive mistrust. I understand now that we are all profoundly flawed. Why else would all this garbage exist, if we didn't let it?

And when we got back he asked me to talk to the tape about it ... I was lying on the bed already half asleep, barely wrapped in a sheet, and he was standing directly above me. It was creepy but I was dazed and I wanted him to know what I was feeling, and then I realized I was really turned on and I told him "put the tape away and f*** me" which he did and I was terrified by everything -- the fact I'd talked like that and the violence/intensity and that same raging face from my dreams. I almost screamed. We spent quite a while just looking at each other after that, him smoothing my hair so gently.

Today was gentle too. A peaceful departure. But I am still disturbed.

*

2/1, 120

10:18 p.m.

We're going to tour Dirty Work through three states. I am preparing tapes and resumes. Acting and career seem straightforward compared to everything else.

This evening I helped Briana with her lines. It was good because we haven't spent much time together lately ... we seem to be growing apart a little. She is so into this role -- more death! -- and the student scene which I am ready to leave. "You and Greg are quite the lovebirds," she teased ... oblivious to the undercurrents. Which is fine, but a change.

G. is gone again. Off to Memphis, someone doing an Elvis miniseries.

*

2/3, 120

8:40 p.m.

Steeling myself for Mountain Home. In a way knowing what I can expect makes it worse. A joyous card from my parents, the book of Titus (??Titus?? who the hell was that?) about salvation and such. I am only going for Purity and I don't even know if she really wants to see me, or what. I feel like I'm flailing a bit and not looking forward to being worn down with Scripture.

Note to next of kin: If I'm ever brainwashed by these people, shoot me.

4?

no

the blood

frank
 greg?
 forgive
 no
 forest running
 I can see them chasing
 grab her
 tear and shred her
 and now me
 reaching for me
 no
 God
 no
 the statue a weatherman a forecast
 no
 don't please
 greg
 no

*

2/5
 11:50 p.m.
 Purity *did* want to talk to me.

Yesterday we went to the movies unaccompanied by her parents -- the result of hard maneuvering by P. who also turned down a date with her brute ape of a boyfriend Jake. But she didn't seem to know what to do once we were alone, just desperate silent looks. I didn't know what to do either so we ended up just driving to the theater conversing stupidly and seeing something insipid. Finally in the parking lot getting into the car when in midsentence she burst into tears. Keep driving, she said. We can't be late home. Screw that I said (note restrained language) and turned off the car. What's wrong?

I just wanted to talk to you so much, she said, and now time is running out. We have time now, I said. I was trying to hug her but the seatbelt was in the way fuss fuss and then when I finally put my arms out she looked as though she wanted to cower away. So I just put my hand on her shoulder. She just wouldn't stop crying and then she made me swear not to tell anyone. Finally:

I don't know what to do, she said. I feel so bad.
 About what?

All this church stuff. Religion. I mean, I used to love it. I loved God. But now ... I don't know ... and then she was off again, these horrible anguished gulping sobs. I didn't know what to say -- I mean I knew what I *wanted* to say but I guessed it probably wasn't the right moment -- and I still didn't feel like I could touch her except for her shoulder which I was holding quite firmly now and I said what is it about religion that you don't like any more?

I don't know ... I see my mom ... I don't think that's what I want to be even though that's what Jake wants ... there are things I want, things I want to know about ... and I don't know why I have to be ashamed about it

What sort of things?

Oh everything, she said. She had managed to control her breathing and now amazingly she gave me a weak smirk, and: I'm a teenager, you know?

I nodded. I do know, I said gravely.

We just looked at each other for a while under the parking lot lights. Then I started the car -- I was trying to think how to say and finally I just said

There are lots of ways to love God.

And I told her it was okay to have questions and to read her Bible and see what was in there about love.

We didn't say anything else but when we got out of the car something in her eyes was alive, despite the puffy tear marks. Hopefully it won't flicker and damp out.

The rest is as I expected. I made up a story about stopping for ice cream on the way home and the next morning we dutifully went to church. Several vehement arguments between me and Frank, with Judith and P. on the sidelines, heads down.

*

2/7, 123

11 p.m.

cramps are bad again. Maybe I'll get it checked out whenever I have the time, ha ha.

I wrote to Will to let him know what happened with Purity. Remote as he is, his letters are the sole bits of stability in my life. Everything else is murky and uncertain ...

G. sent me an old 45 of "Suspicious Pride". I am not sure what he's thinking. I told him about the weekend at Mountain Home and he said "very realistic story, Val." I almost burst into tears ... he's just not with me at all, off in his paranoid haze of possessiveness.

*

2/11, 122

4 p.m.

Briana's brother David is here. Last night we had a little get together and I drank too much and almost lost myself

Why can't humans just be good?

Why were his eyes so warm and welcoming?

I hate this.

I want to go see G. but I can't miss more school more work anything and I don't know where he is anyhow.

I got a letter from the parents, responding to my thank you note. I also got a letter from Purity. You wouldn't have known both letters were referring to the same visit, the same family, the same life. Frank and Judith told me it's not necessary to thank them, their home is always mine whenever I need spiritual shelter, they hope I'll "come home to Jesus" more often, and so forth.

Purity wrote to tell me she's reading her Bible every night like I said. She wants to see me again. I could almost feel her desperate energy radiating from the page, casting outward, looking for a lifeline to grab.

*

2/12, 116

11 a.m.

Last night we all sat around in the kitchen. We were talking about ghosts and then Briana suggested we play with a Ouija board because Annie hadn't ever done it. We lit candles and incense and got all giggly over it. David's fingers were touching mine on the little pointer piece and that made me even more giddy and then the weirdest thing happened. It worked. The power seemed to be coming from Annie because we all took our hands off but her and the piece was flying around the board.

We asked its name: Terence.

When did it die: 1862

How old: 31

How did it die: war

Is there reincarnation? Yes

How many lives do people have? 6

What life is Briana in? 2

What life is Annie in? 1

What life is Nick in? 4

What life is Valerie in? 6

Will Valerie and Greg last (Briana asked this): No

How much longer?: 7 weeks

Will Annie and Keith last? (Annie asked): Don't know

Are there UFOs (David asked this): Yes

What side did you fight on: Grey

I asked why: why not

Then Briana asked whether it had any messages for us:

VAL

LOOK OUT STORM

(I almost fainted because of the dream)

Is there a heaven?: Yes

Are you in heaven?: No

DO you know the future?: Yes

What is my future (Briana?): Don't know

What is my future (Annie?): travel

What is my future (David)?: Don't know
 What is my future?: No
 What does that mean?: No
 Can't you give me a hint?: No
 I must have been shaking or something because Briana asked the next question
 before I could speak
 Are you a good or a bad spirit?: FUCK OFF
 and then it was whizzing around again and David said we'd better try to
 disengage
 So we told it we were going now
 nothing happened
 we said it again and then it spelled: see you soon
 and then it stopped. I was a little shaken up and so David just sat with me on the
 couch for a while, just touching my face and massaging my temples, smoothing
 the wisps of hair, and I fell asleep curled against him. Nothing else happened
 although what we shared was very deep and strange.

I don't know what to think now. I'll readily admit there's quite a bit that goes on outside the realm of our understanding -- but this seemed a little too close to home. Maybe Briana knew a lot of it, but I didn't tell her the dream.

*

2/14, 119

10 a.m.

I woke this morning to find Greg standing at the foot of my bed, all in black, 3 dozen scarlet roses filling his arms. He arrived at 6 and had just been standing there watching me sleep after driving all night.

I guess it's every romantic Cosmo girl's dream, but I almost screamed.

I almost screamed because last night I dreamed that a large shadow named Terence was standing right there, and he said Welcome to my mind and the voice was right inside my head and it was extremely real. I couldn't move or get away from it at all.

Of course I didn't scream but just sort of sucked in and he strew (?) the roses all around the bed and then lay on top of me on top of the white white sheets, clothed, and just touched my face and my hair so gently, my neck, and at first I was anxious because that's just how David was touching me A LITTLE TOO RECENTLY and I wondered if maybe he knew something.

But he just kept gently touching, and his face was open like in the square and just gazing at me gravely and one of my hands was free so I could touch his face too. The roses smelled so sweet. I closed my eyes and his fingers were over my hot tired eyelids and tracing my lips and then I wanted him everywhere and soon I was pushing up against his weight and whispering please and so he did.

When it was over I told him about Terence and he thought it was “remarkable” and he wanted me to write it down so I have. He seems worried ... maybe I’m looking a little frazzled, which I am.

More later.

*

2/16, 117

10:08 p.m.

G. just left today. Things got very strange while he was here but I am too tired to talk much about it. I’m not sure we ever really connected or what.

*

2/17, 119

6 p.m.

I’m a little scared. I don’t know what I’ve gotten myself into.

Purity is pregnant. Jake raped her.

Does the fact that I’d already imagined this scenario mean I’m just as evil?

She called collect from a pay phone and said I was the only person in the world who could help. I can’t even fathom that. That our tenuous connection would mean so much to her makes me want to cry.

It’s up to Purity to get here with clearance for an overnight stay ... the rest is up to me. We’re going to Jackson and then I don’t know where else just driving out and away. She needs to be back in time for church on Sunday.

I wonder if she is strong enough. But then I remember the little things: Dinner at Mountain Home, after Grace. We are talking about Purity’s achievements -- all of us except P. herself, that is, who is looking down at her plate. Her parents are saying they are so looking forward to her being in college at Ole Miss

“Berkeley is my first choice,” Purity said suddenly. Her voice clear and unwavering even though she was still looking down.

“Well is that a fact?” said Frank, slowly. I wondered where this was going

P. just nodded. Tingly silence

“I don’t expect you’ll get in easy,” F. said. “But then you’ve always been a fighter, haven’t you?” P. didn’t say anything. “HAVEN’T YOU, MISSY?”

He was looking at her hard and I just expected her to nod into her plate again but instead she snapped her head up and looked right at him and a lovely flush was climbing into her cheeks as she said “yes father. I have.”

"For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father'; and, 'He who curses the father, let him be put to death.' Matthew fifteen four." Case closed. F. began chewing again.

5:04 a.m.
sobbing with a vague remembrance of a dream
I don't want to contemplate

those people are MY PARENTS I have their DNA in me

and yet when I start meditating on evil/hatred I find it difficult to draw the line

*

2/18, 119

10:52 p.m.

Just after that the phone rang and like magic it was Will. I don't remember what I said but I told him about my dream and Purity and we talked forever and by the end I was so tired, empty after dumping everything on him and thanking him for his Valentine even though it caused so much trouble which I also told him about.

"What is it with you two?" I asked.

Silence but I could tell if I waited he would say.

Finally he cleared his throat. And: "All through life we've kind of wanted the same things."

"But --"

"We just come at it from different angles, Greg is in the shadows I'm in the everyday world."

And then I was asking very quickly, erecting a barricade of question marks "And so? What is it you both want? What is keeping him so bitter against you? DO you want the code? Is it computers? Why can't you just get along? Why doesn't he have a problem with Tom?"

Silence. This time I knew it was the kind that he wouldn't break.

It's amazing how normal I appear. Mrs. Kelsey's fourth grade class is putting on a clown show for the Easter fair. Jarring, non?

*

2/19, 118

11:19 p.m.

Greg was unsurprised to hear the news about Purity "If you can conceive of it, it will happen," he said. He didn't even apologize for the pun.

He wanted us to come to Nashville to do it but I said no and now he's angry. But I couldn't handle him and Purity together ...

Why?

Surely a good relationship is a comfort not a burden at times like this ... but with G. it has never been this way, why do I expect it now?

Because I've gotten to know Will?

*

2/21

10 p.m.

As I passed the statue today I nearly bowled over a small stooped man. He was carrying a bright red umbrella. As I helped to steady him I said just to be conversational that he didn't need his umbrella today. He looked at me and said A STORM IS COMING

And then he shimmied around the other side of the statue and was gone. As in, vanished. There was a squirrel near the boot of the soldier but nothing more.

Sure enough, a couple of hours later big clouds rolled over that fine blue sky and it poured and cracked and split.

Needless to say when I told G. about this he found it interesting. He is in Nashville with plans to be there for a while, just when I am going somewhere else. I want to see him ... we are strangers, very much apart, I want to reestablish the connection before --

Before what? Before it's too late?

It makes me cry just to type those lines. I don't want this to happen. I want it to be good again. Please.

*

2/22, 116

7:30 p.m.

Mail today: A blank postcard postmark blurred, Little Rock?

SEE YOU SOON

Not Purity's handwriting.

*

2/23, 115

11:49 p.m.

G. called and it was more strange than I can handle. He talked to Will and something happened. I don't know what he wouldn't say.

I've got to see you, he said, and I could tell he was upset.

I can't. Purity is here. We're ready to go.
F*** that.
I can't.
Can't?
Can't we just talk about it here?
No. I need to *see* you. Smell you. Chew on you.
What's wrong?
Please
No. Tell me
Just promise --
Anything
When it happens.
What?
Not Will. Anyone but Will.
WHAT?
Remember me, he said. I'll see you soon.

Why did he say that "see you soon" or maybe I'm just paranoid I mean lots of people say that maybe he meant well

I really hope I've thought of everything. Frank and Judith think I'm taking Purity camping. I even bought a permit @ Holly Springs I case they check.

If they find out.

I can't tell if she's scared or what. We have been talking around it. But she is stronger now. She sees the way out even if it means going through hell to get there.

And bolder: asking me about G. and what it was like. I wasn't sure what she meant -- sex? a long-distance relationship? psychosis?
Love, she said. True love.
I didn't have the heart to tell her I didn't know.

end of first file --

February 25, 1995
10 p.m.

A brand-new file for a brand-new life. I can't stand to scroll through the past.

*

2/26
7:13 p.m.

Purity is home. I think everything came off OK.

I had too much time to think. In the waiting room and the drive with Purity sniffling in her sleep in the back.

Part of me can't justify what I've done. If Judith had chosen the same path I wouldn't be here today. And yet I can't believe this is a bad thing.

And I am scared I left loophole somewhere, some alibi unwoven.

Purity seems strong. I coached her when she was whimpering and calling for her mommy as we drove away from the clinic ... we wouldn't couldn't stay in Jackson for the night ... I told her to tell mommy she doesn't want to see Jake any more, she wants to devote herself to the Bible and to being a good daughter in these last months at home. I told her tell them Jake is a bad influence ... that she wants to be pure, and he wants things to move too fast. It's what they want to hear so they'll lap it up. She seemed to understand, nodding at me gravely in the rearview mirror and then she didn't cry any more. Just sniffled and looked without seeing out the window.

We just drove. Yesterday morning we were at the edge of the state and watched the river go by at Natchez ... just sitting in the car in the rain watching the water flow past, trying to see the long view of everything.

There had been so much pain for her during the night and she was still pale but she was talking to me excitedly. She talked so much. She was telling me about her plans, about college and beyond. For an instant I was jealous -- I wanted some of her idealism, her undaunted optimism. In that parking lot, leaning back in the drivers seat watching the rain and the river, for a moment I could pretend it was she who would protect me ... she who would give me life, rather than the other way around. And then instantly I despised myself for these feelings. I still do.

In Vicksburg we went into a bookstore where a large listless woman with hornrimmed glasses approached me and said "I think these are what you're looking for." She thrust two books into my hand and then disappeared down an aisle. Wuthering Heights and Madame Bovary. Melodrama. Is this what I've become?

I want to stop complaining about how everything is going so wrong and it's all so scary like it all exists outside myself and I'm just the weepy observer wringing my hands from the wings. I am not a zombie and I do not live in the 19th century ... I want to avoid the kind of helplessness I felt at the river. I want to wake up.

Things I want:

Greg

Purity alive

Will as a friend

Honesty with everyone

A real acting job

I am thinking of Purity dancing in the rain by the river's edge.

*

2/28

8:33 p.m.

It's happened. Somehow, they know.

What do I do?

Where is Purity? ... Part of me thinks if I were strong I would go and bodily rescue her ... but what good would that do? Take her away from school before she graduates?

They wouldn't kill her, would they? Maybe she could stay with a friend? How do I get to her?

I don't know anything. Just a fax from her waiting at the department, four words:

THEY KNOW WATCH OUT

maybe if I could just convince them it was all my doing they wouldn't possibly come after me and they'll leave her alone

G. is gone. I left a message for Will. I need to tell Briana because I think things are going to get difficult.

There goes the phone.

*

3/1

9:24 p.m.

Everything is quiet now but it took some help from one of G.'s friends who put a caller ID program into the phone. That was just this morning so for 12 hours or so every time it rang we didn't know and it rang so much and most of the time it was just a voice hissing BABY KILLER or MURDERER or SINNER and then hanging up. Now if it's not a number we recognize we let it ring. There are several numbers -- a network? -- but they are all in Arkansas. SO far. I expect more in the mail but that's not as intrusive for Briana.

She took it OK all things considered, maybe it's Ophelia kicking in and accepting the heavy current, which isn't to say she wasn't (& isn't still) angry.

"Why didn't you tell me? I've been so worried about you. You could have leaned on me," she said

I told her I didn't know why and I still don't. Maybe just wanting to contain all the bad things and not let them seep into others' lives ... maybe because talking would have been hard

but then why was it so easy to talk with W.?

Once the phone was sorted out I took a long drive up toward Holly Springs and into the woods where G. took me -- I still haven't talked about that, too late now! and sat by the stream again just to think. I could remember G. asking me softly what I was thinking and was I scared and I answered aloud

YES I AM SCARED

This time because I could find nothing redeeming in what I have caused. My own actions -- a vain attempt at heroism -- pride, reckless endangerment of another, I still haven't heard from her, is she really better off? And now Briana drawn in, and the way G. looked at me that first morning, who am I really helping here? No one. Maybe I am evil. I thought I was trying to love and forgive but the intentions don't count, it's the result that matters or is it?

And I tried to think of comforting thoughts but the only thing in my mind was Sade:

I am one of those who has to be defeated
And when I vanish
I want all trace of my existence
to be wiped out

I drove home the whole way contemplating a well-timed acceleration into a tree.

*

3/2

8:48 p.m.

recovering from a debilitating round of cramps. A fist with long claws is in my uterus clenching, unclenching, shredding, the talons stabbing at me like hot fire. I actually went to health services, skittering like a crab, all doubled over. Briana went with me. The nurse could find nothing wrong for the moment. She sent me home with birth control pills and an appointment for next week. My cycles will be chemically-induced and supposedly the fist will be stoned into submission.

I took Briana to lunch to thank her for accompanying me and she told me she feels a bit trapped, understandably, and wants to stay with friends for a while. Which is a gentle way of saying I should move out. Only reasonable and she wasn't angry but we were both sad thinking about our faded friendship.

*

3/3

11:51 p.m.

A message hastily scrawled on the back of a flyer for her high school pep rally. Mailed Friday.

I am still alive in every way
They blame you primarily

watch yourself
 thank you
 Love P.

Other mail: tons of it. All the glossy pictures of mauled fetuses (feti?), six letters containing only quotes of Scripture in bright red marker. All from Arkansas. No suspicious packages. Not as bad as I thought.

I wish G. were here even though he probably wouldn't be much comfort but he would understand what's coming at me. I wish Will were here because he would be much comfort even though he wouldn't be able to understand what's coming at me. Don't they understand it's two totally different relationships that are in no way in competition with each other? I hate this either/or situation when to me it is so clear that G. is love and passion and Will is a friend. Maybe the answer is neither and I should meet Tom, ho ho.

I'm feeling better, in an unraveled sort of way. P.'s message meant everything.

2:13 a.m.

Those lines from Sade. I remembered them wrong. It's:

I am one of those who has to be defeated
 and from this defeat I want to sieze
 all I can get with my own strength
 I step out of my place
 and watch what happens
 without joining in
 observing
 noting down my observations
 and all around me
 stillness
 And when I vanish
 I want all trace of my existence
 to be wiped out

*

3/4

11:12 p.m.

Finally found G. He seemed wary but wants to come here, even though for once I am ready to go to him. He's thinking of staying for a while, maybe a week, which would be so great. Before it's just been all sex and strangeness and just when we're getting around to talking like normal he's gone. Maybe this time we can connect, get back on track.

Saw Briana today and talked, also good. I was able to apologize for everything again in a less hysterical fashion and she seemed ready to accept it. She's going to move in with Annie ... said she wouldn't even feel safe here with me gone.

Am I foolish to be so nonchalant? To notice the sunshine and the early spring? There is plenty of Motrin for the cramps and caffeine for the mornings. SO little between me and a new life. In a way Purity and I are working toward the same thing on the same schedule ... just finish and go on. We need to devise a method of communication.

*

3/5

7:02 a.m.

Dreams are the chinks in my armor.

I'm alone here. I feel that now.

What if that had really been someone at the window?

I feel like a teenager again, alone in the house late, music on loud to mask the creaks and branch scrapings. I'd like to go back to sleep now.

Am I being watched as I type?

No. I will not yield and be bludgeoned into timidity.

I wish I knew self-defense.

There's the phone.

3:07 a.m.

That would have been Will. we talked for a long while ... he was happy to hear me on an upswing. He is going down, however -- which made the whole thing difficult. The line between empathy and something else has been blurred in the past.

I was worried about you

Thank you. Thanks for all the listening. (Polite, even friendly, but no I don't want to delve any further)

Valerie --

How did the release go? Rosebud 2.1?

and so on. always plucking the conversation away. It was not comfortable and I hated having to risk sounding unfriendly but it was right.

So quiet. When I'm not scared I like it. Maybe I'll like living alone for a while. Solitude could be productive.

And I'm not scared oh no. Too much J.Daniels for that. What do they call it, irish courage? No what is it? Damn

*

3/6

11:45 p.m.

Where is G.? I don't want to leave the door open for him but I am so tired. Maybe I'll just sit here and type until he comes.

I am surrounded by all sorts of comforting technology especially that sleek caller ID circuitry but I am wondering.

No I'm not going to wonder. I am going to write about the lovely fresh spring sky after this morning's rain and the robins gluttoned on worms, little shreds of worm hanging from beaks. Being a student ... leisure, just wandering through the stacks smelling them more than anything else, what title was I looking for?

Gold has handled a gun. She was talking about it vis a vis the carnage described in Sade. I wonder if she has killed anyone.

I can't remember his eyes. What does this mean? This time I am going to notice. Remember these things forever.

*

3/8

11:13 a.m.

G. is still here. He's going to stay and help me move. I think I have a place. He's out now doing something, "errands."

Anyhow. I think things are OK now.

What was

ANYHOW. I THINK THINGS ARE OK NOW.

Except for my latest crime -- impersonating a Umiss admissions officer so I could get to Purity at her school. I told her to find a good payphone and fax me the number so I'd know to pick up. She sounded all right, a little strained. How is home? "Holy hell as usual." They're sending her to a special camp/retreat for spring break ... for wayward lapsed Christian sinner girls. She has a month, a little more before she hears about colleges. She understands what she has to do.

Watch out, she said.

What?

I've gotta go. I'll fax.

Click and hum.

His eyes are walnut and gold. Amazing conversations.

*

3/9

12:49 a.m.

G. asleep. Tonight we were just sitting around, Briana Joey Annie etc., and the phone rings: Will. G. goes to the phone, picks up, slams down.

We have talked some but not enough, evidently.

*

3/11

10:20 p.m.

Throwing or shoveling things into boxes and not a moment too soon. Today a brick came through the window. There are some area codes from Mississippi now. How do they do that?

Bedroom, living room, kitchen/eating area. A full sized bathtub. I feel I will be safe there. I mean, I'm safe here, but there no one will know me, they won't trace me. I'm not forwarding my mail, in accordance with Greg's instructions. He says to close all my accounts, everything, and start over with new ones. How does he know all this stuff? I wish he would just stay instead.

OK the computer goes away now. I've got you hooked, says G. triumphantly. He wonders if maybe Purity has email and he could set me up and we could talk that way.

next entry from the safe house!

*

3/12

4:17 p.m.

G. left at noon. I went to sleep after that and just woke up. Have I really been so tired?

Where do I begin?

We talked. God we talked so much. Once we started we just couldn't stop

We are staying together. We are definitely staying together. We seemed to have moved to another plane though, more real. Before it was attraction and then the weird chemistry and just hanging out in the easy way. Then the separation which put everything in a weird stasis. Now things are more serious ... serious negotiations, serious talking. Jealousy. Careers. Will. He didn't let me in the way I wanted but I think we cleared up any misunderstanding he had

he had? I had

and he conceded that whatever was between them wasn't a reason for me not to enjoy Will's acquaintance. Very magnanimous (?sp?), difficult for him, and I must honor that. Acquaintance is the key word. I wish it could be more but maybe in the future.

The usual chemistry and weirdness in abundance still. It's just this element is new. In a good way new I think. So much affirmation, stronger now. We will travel this summer.

We.

4?

why tonight

why

I thought it would go

greg

no

why

no

*

3/13

6:17 p.m.

I'm feeling a little shaky. I woke up sobbing and couldn't shake it for so long. Nothing in my head in particular but just a feeling like everything crashing down

my eyes are so tired it's so early and there's so much to do

6:33

Oh God

GOD

The phone rang and somehow they know and it was someone hissing about the black clouds of Armageddon

why didn't I put in that caller ID

God

I thought I would be safe here

GOD

Why do I keep writing that word could there really be a god in a place like this?

I don't want to be alone

G and the way he held my arms down elbows dug deep in my triceps clasping my hands tight my knuckles wanting to pop

and the way he hung up that phone

and the whipping

and P.'s fax

and the emptiness pressing down on me deep in the stacks and the sudden terror who is in the next aisle? is he following me? and the excitement and the terror at the excitement

*

3/16

high noon

I am back in every way, with reinforcements. Some dolt in health services gave me a prescription for Prozac, which I don't need and which I'm not really taking, only at night sometimes.

And I've got Gold's gun.

That's all there is to say. I am not going to start whimpering.

Purity is off to camp tomorrow. She can barely stand it. She was only half-joking about running away but we talked and she agreed to stick with her plan. She might be able to get email at school but she is suspicious of people reading it ...

Amongst the fetus photos I got a letter from Will. He is thinking of leaving his wife. He wants to come here. There was more but I ignored it in my reply, instead focussing on the convenient issues and alternatives. His coming here is not an option.

Dreams. The man with the red umbrella is a new theme. I follow him through all kinds of landscapes. There is no terror, only peace and the smell of wet grass, fertile earth, trees. Together we have been to Paris and Little Rock and Holly Springs forest.

*

3/17

4:19 a.m. I guess that makes it 18

Greg is here again. He was waiting on the stoop when I came home. I screamed -- I thought he was I don't know and I was so scared I thought I would die. Then the fear became another kind of adrenalin and we didn't make it much past the door, just sort of thrashed around the kitchen, pans clanging to the floor, ripped clothing, my knees were still giving way from the fright and I was nearly senseless, jibbering strange lewd things which only seem to incite him. The old danger is back and I can't tell whether I'm glad or disappointed that his last visit seems never to have happened at this point

*

3/19

11:56 a.m.

G. gone already, in fact he left yesterday after less than 24 hours. Just dropped by, he said. In the neighborhood.

What?

He didn't answer, just rubbed his cheek against mine before kissing me and moving to the door. Turned and stood in the doorway looking at me, still blurry in bed. He reached out into air as though to caress my face and then he was gone.

I wonder if it wasn't a dream. He seemed haunted and I wonder what it is he's confronting.

I went to the woods yesterday and just wandered. I have bruises in several strange places.

Then I got home to find another letter from Will. He enclosed his picture which I put on the fridge. He is such a benevolent force that the photo is like a little ikon watching over me.

Watching the door?

He has moved away from Jennifer for a while but it seems it will be temporary. I just need to get my head together and so forth. I wrote him back and tried to be helpful. I told him I didn't have a photo for him but I'm sure I could dig up an interesting video or two, ha ha. What was that about getting your head together Will?

I still haven't unpacked anything and it's unnerving to just have boxes and nothing else. I know I'll only be here for a couple of months more but I could sure use a couch.

*

3/20

10:52 p.m.

Strange how removed I am from everyone at school. A couple of drinks and a chat with Joey and he is asking whether Marat or Sade is supposed to come off better who prevails Sade, I answered impatiently isn't this obvious?

But who should prevail?

Silence. I am smirking. He just wouldn't understand. He is looking for an argument like in the old days when plays were merely fodder for flexing intellectual muscle, flourishes and little aimless skirmishes, exercises. How could I explain that this stuff is my life now?

Yeah, okay so what are you going to *do* about it?

Well, I've got my gun right here and I'm ready for it.

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING YET

WHAT ABOUT ALL YOUR SINS

YOUR GUN WON'T HELP YOU FACE YOUR OWN SOUL

*

3/23

It has taken me so long just to open this file again.

I had Ted take a look. He said someone broke in through the modem. How? He didn't know. But that's impossible? He shrugged. The only other way is if someone was right here.

If someone was right here.

Now I have all sorts of barriers. A password to even get into the system, a password on this file. Ted added some sort of splice to the phone so all the calls in or out will be logged.

And now I chain the door.

I called G. and asked if he knew anything about it and then I was so ashamed for even having suspected. We are meeting halfway again. I need to get out and so does he. Away from the mail and the phone and the PTA parents and even from my friend Sade.

*

3/24

5:55 p.m.

Destination: Selmer, Tennessee. Turned in the rough draft of my paper and now I'm getting the hell out of here. Locking up tight, you betcha. The gun will stay home.

*

3/26

9:06 p.m.

Surreality with G. Holding my face between his palms and I can feel the pressure like that scene in "Gone with the Wind" just before he carries her up the stairs. his strength. I am practically fainting, clasping at him and I can feel him shaking. I want to be with you all the time, he's saying.

Yes

Valerie

Yes

I love you

I love you

It's not long now. Let's just be together

Yes

And then we'll go

Anywhere

Finishing each other's sentences all weekend. The intensity ought to scare me but it doesn't any more.

And then to come home to the messages. Will says he is taking a vacation. Someone informs me I am going straight to hell. Briana is planning her cast party. It seems normal now.

*

3/27

10:15 a.m.

I got a long letter from Purity at camp. She met another girl from near Mountain Home who is in a similar situation and together they endured the campfire songs and morning meditations. Compared notes ... formed the bond. Together they are plotting something for the summer as a getaway, Europe with a youth group seems likely.

Her letter was so jubilant and self-assured. She is giddy with having prevailed and with the end in sight. She is back and I want to see her again ... maybe I will go to her graduation.

*

3/28

10:34 p.m.

Postcard, indecipherable postmark:

UMBRELLAS UP!

Brought Briana pizza. Despite everything I've said it looks like it will be a pretty interesting production. Briana seems quite lively considering her immersion, ho ho, in the role.

Joey was there. "How's my little sadist?" he joked.
Ho ho.

Being around the rehearsal I realized how much I've been missing it. I didn't have much of a choice but it will be nice to get back to a real production. The tour starts May 10.

*

3/31

9:21 a.m.

G. here. Last night we went to the woods again. The breeze spilling the stars across the sky. We went to the old place again and sat quietly for a while saying nothing and made love the cool moist air across my breasts as I sat over him. In the shadow of the pines G.'s grimace of ecstasy took on a wild beauty and by the end we were both crying and holding each other so tightly.

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle he said as we lay there halfdozing
What?

Dante, he said. At the end of the inferno they climb out of the pit and they're in Jerusalem and they see the stars.

Speaking so softly in my ear his breath a warm tickle and I am half asleep against him my head on his chest so I can hear his heart and I am thinking in that stupid notawake way that I never knew he spoke Italian and at the same time I am thinking remember this remember this

I will remember it forever.

I am being melodramatic again but I don't care. It's true.

I'll remember.

--end of file--