
TWO

Those are some of my earliest memories. Although not an all-inclusive list, I wish to record them here, in my ~~diary~~ journal, commenced on this day, my sixteenth birthday. Sixteen but anything but sweet, even if Mom & Dad would disagree.

I love my parents, Dad especially. He teaches me a lot without making me feel as if he is teaching. Mom is more text book, more patronizing. I sometimes resent her for that. But that doesn't mean I love her any less, even if I'm guilty of sometimes patronizing her in return.

But something is not right. The dreams still haunt me, and the scars on the bottom of my right foot—faded but still visible—are proof. I'm convinced they're the result of cigarette burns. Daddy smokes cigars. He would never do anything to hurt me. This I know, for my Father loves me. And Mom does, too. She never smoked, not cigarettes, not marijuana. I've asked her.

So who did this to me, and why? Who is the woman from my dreams? She resembles no one I know in my real world, but I'm convinced she's someone I ~~know~~ know, or once knew.

I intend to find out who she is. But how do I go about it? I don't want to ask Mom or Dad, but I'm not sure why. To my knowledge neither of them has ever lied to me (at least I've never caught them in a lie). I don't want to put them into a

J. Conrad Guest

position of having to lie to protect me from the truth. Yet why should the truth hurt? It is what it is. It can set you free. John, 8-32.

Truth. We often fear it. I know I do.

Surely they know about the scars. Maybe they think I've never noticed them. Who bothers to ever look at the bottoms of their feet?

Enough about the unpleasantness of my life. I have much for which to be thankful. Including a mother who taught me to never end a sentence with a preposition. Hah-hah.

I don't know how often I'll write in this journal. My best friend Julie says she writes in hers every day, about her boobs getting bigger and how the shorter the skirts she wears the more the boys look at her. She even wrote about starting her period last year. I started mine two years ago but I'm not going to write about it.

Oh! I just did! (giggles)

I don't know that I'll have something worth writing about every day, and I don't want this record to be composed of meaningless meanderings scribbled down just to keep up with Julie: "I had oatmeal & orange juice for breakfast, went to school, passed my history test, told goofy Bobby Porter in third hour biology I wouldn't go to the Friday dance with him (boys! Ewww, I don't want to ever grow up—why did Peter Pan have to be a boy?), came home, did homework, had meatloaf, green beans & mashed potatoes for dinner, watched Carol Burnett (Tim Conway sure is funny!), and went to bed." Boring!

So maybe I'll write something tomorrow or maybe I won't. Maybe I won't write anything for a week, or longer. It all depends on whether anything happens to me worth ~~writing about~~ chronicling so that, at the end of my life, I can see where I was at sixteen, and whether my grammar & punctuation are as good as I think ~~it is~~ they

The Girl Who Loved Cigars

are today. Will I laugh at all the strike-throughs, or only roll my eyes in disbelief?

— October 21, 1972