

## 1. INDIE KID

And I've almost figured out the system. I'll buy your CD. Just give me a rebate. Give me a rebate just for listening. Pay me to listen. *How can we do that? Where can we get the money to pay you, kid?* Let the yuppies pay. The ones who like corporate rock. The college grads who work for Fortune 500 companies and have just discovered indie. The ones who have just learned about Death Cab for Cutie after I've been listening to them for five years. I'm a pioneer. I'm like Lewis and Clark. I'm like fucking Davy Crockett. Hell, I'm fucking David Bowie and his Bowie knife if you can dig that.

I am the ultimate consumer; give me a bottle and watch me suck on it. Strap me up, and patch in the electrodes. Watch the changes in my nervous system. Pay me just to vegetate. There's an equation behind all this, and I'm solving it just by being. I'm measuring current flows for you. I'm reacting before you can even move. My reaction time is faster than a bullet. That's why you need me. I'm an indie kid. And I'm in tight jeans. Kiss me!

I know the feeling. Every kid that I know has it. We all want to get paid for hanging out and going to shows. Everyone wants a piece of the action. There are the journalists, the promoters, the photographers, the agents, the managers, the producers, the engineers, the publicists, the stylists, the drivers, the caterers, the masseurs. Everyone's got an angle. Everyone wants to write the script. Everyone's got the script down in his basement.

I love America. I have been raised on the entrepreneurial spirit. From my first lemonade stands, I graduate to selling cold drinks outside Allman Brothers concerts. Good fortune is already part of my early inheritance. From that point on, I move to more serious endeavors. I realize that people who go to concerts have loads of money to throw around.

When I am still young, I begin to study design on my own. It is all part of my aptitude for art. I realize how I can make things of real value. I remember doing my first screen printing when I am 12. We end up selling counterfeit shirts outside of a Kiss concert. Later I perfect the same techniques at Van Halen and ZZ Top shows.

As my skills become more sophisticated, I realize that I can make my own tickets. I start by making a few for my friends. Later, I become much more ambitious. I sell the tickets for a sizeable profit. I am learning a new business. But I can't stop there.

I soon grasp a technique that almost borders on money laundering. We learn how to trade counterfeit tickets for real tickets. This became especially handy when the real tickets are too complex to copy. It even enables us to get around scanners.

We are all into classic rock. My buddies and I get together after a show, and we smoke dope and listen to classic rock. We have the money that we've just earned at the show. We're all get so excited when we count it out and put it all on the table in succeeding denominations. It gave us a sense of real power.

One of my friends suggests that we pool our resources and buy a stash of weed. Then we could sell it at shows and car races and shit. I don't want to go down that road. There is no artistry in dealing. I don't want to get into the cloak and dagger secrecy of it all. I like forging tickets. That is enough for me.

I remember the first time that some guy brings over a Pavement record over. He also has some Dinosaur Jr. and Luna. All great stuff. But it freaks me out at first.

"Put the Zeppelin back on," I scream at Diamond.

Diamond tried to convince me how great the stuff is.

“You don’t even need to smoke up. You can get high just listening to this stuff.”

I don’t want to take his word for it. So I borrow the stuff and give it a listen. And now, here I am. I am ready to change the world. I just don’t know where to start.

My dad left us when I was 8. And my mom had to fend for herself in the cruel world. And she went to college and then later on got an MBA. She made it the way that she could by climbing the corporate ladder one step at a time

I’ve got my own plan or lack thereof. It’s all the same. If I can reach paradise by listening to Modest Mouse or Belle and Sebastian, plug me in. Turn the Sonic Youth on all the way. I am ready to blast off.

I had a friend who told everyone that he was the long lost bastard child of Thurston Moore. We all knew that he was full of shit. But just to claim that you were related to one of the founding members of Sonic Youth, Mr. Indie himself, that was cool. Thurston invented it all. Sure my friend was a head case. But who fucking cares. He’d wear shades all the time. In doors. In the dark. It was just a maximum experience. We didn’t know what Thurston Jr. was on. But then he never did either. He just got high on the sky. Ditto, dude!

My mother feels that her unsuccessful marriage is due to her woeful naivete with regards to sex. She has promised herself that the same thing is not going to happen to me. From early on she has tried to indoctrinate me in a sexual education. Believe me, a lot of her so-called teaching is more of an interference in my own development. The phrase *sex police* has taken on a whole new meaning with her. When I am still a kid, she buries my face in the centerfolds of *Playboy* and *Hustler*. I try to resist the objectification of the sex act. But these magazines only encourage that identification. I feel more like a boy whose father has taken him target practicing. I am meant to develop a steady hand as my bullets go in for the kill.

Even though the young girls hardly approach the air-brushed images of these sex automatons, I feel trained to zero in my desires to the grids imposed by the stroke magazines. My sexuality almost becomes an independent entity. It runs on with a full-fledged plan of its own, while I just seem to follow after it. I remember particularly an athletic session with one Mandy Seasons. Climax runs into climax. The rather proficient thirteen year old does not hesitate to provoke maximum arousal. The sex becomes more and more of an outer body experience. She herself suffers some kind of psychic disorder. She talks about the spirit of Daniel Webster who has invaded her body.

Despite the seeming Herculean nature of our sexual congress, I still feel total embarrassment with regards to the sex act. My body has just gone on and done something *to* me. For the time being I have zoned in on the kick of it all. But after it is done, I feel this immense emptiness. My feeling only becomes more profound. I am sure that I have done something wrong.

My feelings about sex take a bizarre turn precisely because they contradict the tenets of my mother’s teaching. She has taken her approach due to the guilt that has deformed her during her teen years. For her part, she has created a guilt in me that is even more paramount than anything that she has experienced in her day. As well, I feel drawn to this experience with such an intense pull. I know the pangs of the addict.

When I stop bringing my female friends around, my mother is disturbed by what is going on. She actually encourages me to bring girls to my room. I remember a quite disturbing

incident when I invite Celine Rogers to my room. This is supposed to be a fun time of listening to music and talking about silly stuff. My mother bursts in the room and asks, "Are you two going to have sex?" Celine doesn't understand the visit at first. She thinks that my mother is here to punish the both of us for unclean thoughts. That is Celine's upbringing. In fact, my mother's intent is quite the opposite. She has invited herself in with a quasi-voyeuristic intent. I know that she would never stay in the room if Celine and I actually did something intimate together. But my mother clearly gives off that vibe. Worse, she has crumbed the play. Celine is a friend. I value her as such. My mother seems to be recruiting her for the sex industry. This is the farthest thing from my intent. My mother is acting like overactive boys in the locker room. I may have thought about kissing, but telling is the last thing that I wanted to share with my mother.

I think that my mother's own guilt only enters a new phase through her so-called teaching. The results border on the perverse. She still can't accept sex as a natural part of her being. It is still this thing to be exposed and gawked at. I occasionally find myself attracted to girls who take this attitude. This raw exhibitionism is an impediment to my further development. But I give in quite immediately to its pull.

The girls that I truly like resist such influences. But many young teens realize the immediate gratification that they can get by looking oversexed. They crave the instant attention and temporary popularity. It is a poisonous mix. But it seems to take me down the same path. At times, this shame is coupled with smoking dope. To be honest, the effects of the drug dull some of the attendant feelings of guilt. And they seem to highlight the already existing pleasurable reaction to the sex act itself. I am trying to resist, but all these influences are only making me more of a stoner.

When I quit taking pot and swear off the meaningless sex, I start to feel intense paranoia. I am completely alone. My friends appear to shun me. And girls act as if I has some kind of a disease. None of these feeling are based in reality. But I experience them nevertheless.

I am almost sixteen at this point. I am afraid that this cloud of guilt will remain with me forever. I am totally freaked out when Melissa takes an interest in me. Melissa seems to be different. She is teaching me about music that I don't know. We already share an interest in Modest Mouse. She is the first to play the Cocteau Twins and Lush for me. I have never felt anything so beautiful. She is also into Blonde Redhead and the Brian Jonestown Massacre.

With Melissa, I start to develop a new emotion, true love. She is a total dream. I am now totally afraid of sex. I am particularly worried that I will totally fuck up, and she will run off to some other guy. But I try to put all this out of my mind. I know when the moment comes that I will be OK.

Melissa is this total goddess. She is a little older than me. She writes poetry and paints. She's a genius. She knows that I'm into drawing. I share some of the stuff that I've done. We really get along so well.

I am afraid to bring her by to the house. I don't want my mother to affect her in some weird way. The first time that we hook up, it doesn't go all that well. I think after all this time, that there is something wrong. My bad sexual experiences have finally caught up with me. And it is only going to get worse.

Melissa is patient. She suggests that we hold off on the sex for another time. She even

questions her interest in guys. Although this may be a passing thing, I myself hardly recover from the embarrassment. We seem not to be seeing each other as much.

Brianna is tall and very thin. She has that model look, one that shines from the moment that she enters the room. She looks as if she never eats. She plays acoustic guitar. She is artistic in her own way. Brianna is also interested in me. It is so strange because I had often expressed interest in her when I was younger. She had considered me a twirp. But now that we are both in tenth grade, her desire for me has blossomed. I'm in love with Melissa. But things are really going shitty with her. I have avoided her for all of two weeks. She's one grade ahead of me. Her parents are pressuring her to get good grades for college so she isn't out as much. It doesn't phase her yet.

I'm at a party with Brianna, and we start to talk about Sonic Youth.

"I didn't know that you liked them."

"What about the Butthole Surfers?" I ask.

Her eyes light up, "Only the early albums. I really love *Hairway to Steven*."

She sneaks me into her bedroom. It's in the basement, and you really can't hear a thing in the rest of the house. All of a sudden, I've got my mojo back. It's a total trip.

I believe that my good times with Brianna are a result of quitting dope. But now I am so messed up with regards to Melissa. I'm not sure if I should call her or what

After a couple of weeks, Melissa and I start to hang out again. I make out with her a few times. I am still hanging out with Brianna. It is progressing beyond the sex. And it is freaking me out. I don't know how to handle all this. I feel as if I am split down the middle. All because of my mother's fucked up teachings.

I have this friend Simon. Simon is a bit of a mystic. He's done acid for a while. Then he discovers that he can achieve a better high through meditation. Simon starts to hang out with Brianna and me. He's really into 60's psychedelia, Thirteenth Floor Elevators and early Floyd. He and Bri start to listen to music together at her place. It becomes a convenient excuse to duck out. I realize that Simon is really digging on Bri.

Brianna isn't totally sold. She still is getting off on the sex with me. And that is great and all, but I don't feel the same about Brianna as I do about Melissa.

I don't know what sets them off. But I decide to leave Simon and Brianna alone one night. The next day Simon is all weird with me. I know that he's been with Bri. And now he is losing it. He feels as if he's really done something shitty to me. I don't want to give up Brianna. For once in my life, I feel that the sex can progress beyond this alienated kind of thing. It is almost a portal to Nirvana. Things have really got bizarre on me. I have a talk with Simon. We are hanging around Gwinnet Place Mall. I'm not even sure what got us out here. I think he came out here to look at a car. He's in the food court.

He tells me, "I really like Brianna. I know that the two of you have been together. But we're really hitting it off."

I'm not sure how to react. This is almost all for the best. But I have really started to like Brianna. Is this how a divorce happens in real life? Thanks, Mom!

So I try to get back with Melissa after all my troubles. She's feeling strange about us being together. I feel as if this is going to mark me for life. And things were going so well in my life—REALLY!

When I look back at my teens, it's a wonder that I have even stayed sane. I think music has helped me hold it together. *Hold it together* describes it perfectly as it was this strange balance between night and day. Melissa moves away to go to college at the University of Virginia. Down deep, I miss her badly. Even though things went pretty well between us during my junior year, it was never the same as when we first met. There was that moment when things were too perfect, and I didn't know how to handle it. Now, I feel like I am about to vanish and that moment will never be that perfect again.

When I finally finish high school, I go to a community college. I hardly think about Melissa anymore.

There is a rumor that the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are coming to Echo Lounge. It is going to be a life-changing event to have Karen O in our town. When we line up for the show, it is still light out. Carol saves me a place in line. Everyone has that same haggard look. Too much to worry about, too little to eat. It might not seem to be such a big deal. This is our saving grace. This is our manna.

I think that Carol is nineteen. That would make her about a year younger than I am. She seems to know so much more than I do about music. She is a scientist. She lives it as real. I just skim the surface and use it to feed my raging high.

For the past few years there are a bunch of us who have made it a practice to get to shows early. There's that intimacy that we get from being in the front. There is this illusion that the performance is being offered exclusively for a select few who have made it up there early. Everyone else is only experiencing things second hand. It is strange how we have turned standing line into an art form.

Things change when we all hang out together. Going to a show has become an event. A real happening. Kids flock from small towns, where they are picked on, to Atlanta, where they can feel at home. They come to a show early and hang out with other kids who have a similar experiences in their small town. They no longer feel like a rejects. This is indie not punk. They don't celebrate their sense of feeling rejected. They create a sense of togetherness based on what they like.

I think we are sick and tired of the rocker in the sleeveless AC-DC t-shirt who is just a regular bully to all the other kids in the neighborhood. Being an indie kid is getting beyond that stereotype. At first, indie is based on the misplaced kid who can't along with girls. This style of music eventually becomes part of alternative with its complaint rock. Indie evolves to another phase where it becomes more about creating new kinds of soundscape for the mind. It isn't simply about criticizing the social reality. The listener can enter new world just by hearing the music. It isn't so much rock n' roll anymore. The Dismemberment Plan and early Death Cab for Cutie pick up the mantel from Pavement. You can also hear the same thing in American Analogue Set.

Sure, bands like Superchunk or Pavement developed a following. But these bands were never really about celebrity. Even Brita Phillips, later of Luna, hardly induced a sense of rock star adulation in her fans. It takes the hyperactive Karen O to attract the special attention from her fans. She represents the dream of New York City where every freak can be transformed into a fashion princess. For many the pilgrimage to New York becomes the trek to the new Oz.

Karen O can set everyone on fire with her tantrum of a show. It is so liberating. The media has offered hope to these backwater towns. Karen O is a new messiah.

She can't do it alone. In his own way, guitarist Nick Zinner is a legend. Bearing more than a passing resemblance to Jamie Reid of Jesus and Mary Chain, the suicide leaps of his slide guitar awaken the dead from their long-deserved slumber. His venom-spiked bites prove worthy counterpoint to Karen's banshee wails and offer a new soundtrack to our suburban alienation. These are not the type to linger over faded dreams. Nick is the noble knight trying to beat off the phantoms in pursuit of his lady. He gives new meaning to the shake in the rattle and roll. His momentum itself is the hook. His chaotic stabs only encourage her to lose control more.

When she finally takes the stage, the suspense has been killing us. There would be no Yeah Yeah Yeahs without Brian Case. His insistent beats really set things off. Everyone around me is crazy with the appearance of Karen. She prowls the stage as she gins. She is playing with ham sandwiches that she intends to throw at the crowd. At one point, she fills her mouth with water and spits in my direction. I have been baptized.

The show is everything that we expected. As it progresses, everyone is jumping up and down and going wild. When they play "Y Control", we are all invited into this particular insanity. None of us can hold back. Nick's breathless deep guitar tones cut through us all. We are all shaken by drama of the song. Nick's stirring lines in the higher register are eerie and add to the frenzy of her performance. By the time that they play "Date with the Night" we have all lost it. The driving guitar line accompanies her jumping and beating the air. The crowd tries to imitate her energy. But she is leading them all down the precipice. In the break in the middle of the song, we all prepare for that final assault. It is even more stupendous than we imagined. I am flying. I look over at Carol. She has big smile on her face. It is hard to see very far back in the Echo Lounge. However, from what I can see, the crowd has been overwhelmed. I am able to grab Carol a set list on a paper plate. She is more than overjoyed.

Carol is overjoyed, "I'm ready to move to New York tomorrow."

I look at my watch, "It already is tomorrow."

She plans to drive back to Birmingham tonight. I wish that she could stay.

"I've got to work in the morning. Not all of us are students who live at home." She is also teasing me. She takes classes at UAB.

We start to talk about the first time that we met. It was early 2002. I went over to Birmingham with Jerry to see the Strokes. They played at Five Points Music Hall. It was an explosive event. Carol was waiting outside in the rain with her friends when we walked up on the line. We all huddled close to the building trying to keep dry. Inside you could hear them play "New York City Cops" during sound check.

There was such a sense of elation when we arrived inside the venue. We waited and waited listening to the same Jonathan Richman song for what seemed like 100 times. Carol looked at me. She peered deep into my eyes. I knew that I was part of something. It was still the days when I was captivated by Melissa. But I wanted to kiss Carol at that moment. She said it all.

Even the roadies for the Strokes seemed cool. It was our first taste of New York. When the Strokes finally made it to the stage, it was so awesome. The whole place went crazy. The energy never stopped. Julian threw himself into the crowd at "Take It or Leave It." We died.

When we left Five Point Music Hall, there was this immense rush that came over us. We were all walking on air. A kid turned to me and said, "You were part of it too!" We all were. I gave Carol a hug as we left. I promised to keep in touch.

Today she is standing next to me by her car. I want to bring back that moment in Birmingham and roll it up with the show that we have just seen. I can barely contain myself. She gives me a hug. She squeezes hard. I reach down slightly to kiss her. I don't want her to go.

"Come visit me in Birmingham."

"I will." Although I really doubt that I will ever make it there.

I have parked a little further away from the venue. As I am about to get to my car, some punk boy accosts me.

"Have you been to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs?" he asks.

"Yeah," I realize how silly I sound.

"You're just a trendy little yuppie."

"I'm just a kid like you."

He seems angry, "Bull shit. You're just a trendy little suburban boy. You're going to drive back to your safe house away from the real world." He obviously doesn't know my mother. So what if I'm going to drive away. I don't live here.

"What do you want from me?" I ask.

He looks me in the eye, "Honesty. Look at this tattoo. It says 'I suffer'. And I do every day. Just to find food. You just open the refrigerator."

"What do you want from me? What can I do? Do you want a dollar?"

He spews his venom all at once, "I want you to keep pretending. You see Karen O on MTV, and all of a sudden, you're reborn. That's more shit. You're swimming in your own bile. You're drowning. You're not living your life. It's just the movie version. Turn off the TV inside your brain!" I get in my car and drive away. I can see him giving me the finger in my rear view mirror.

I am an imposter in my own life. I try to live it as if it is really me. But I just go through the motions. I don't really understand anything in depth. Even the music that I listen to. It is line notes that I have memorized and tried to put into practice. This is who I am. The face on the package.

I have been supplied with a biography. I have been offered goals for my life. I have followed the invitation provided by the record company, I will be whoever you want me to be. I cannot ever be myself; there is no self that I can be. There are products that were offered to me. I buy them all. I order all the albums that they feel suit my unique taste. And when I receive the albums, I put them all on my ipod. I listen to them all the time. I allow them to affect my life. I have been changed by listening to these songs.

Since I first listened to these songs, I have realized things that are not right in my life. I am somehow inadequate. And there are steps to follow to remedy this inadequacy. I have begun to follow all these steps. It is slow progress. My habits have been developed because I have grown attached to my lifestyle.

I realize that we as a species are driving every living thing including ourselves to extinction. Unless we change our ways, we will not even have time to react to the coming cataclysm. I have learned this lesson from the music that I listen to. It reminds me that we must

learn to live together, or destruction will be the only result of our lifestyle.

I am trying to do simple things to change. I turn my t-shirt inside out so that I can wear it an extra day. I try to ride my bike instead of drive. I walk when I can. I recycle paper, plastic, and tin and aluminum cans. I don't buy gas before 6PM. I turn off all electrical appliance when they are not in use. There is something else that I need to do. I don't even know what I am supposed to do anymore. I am listening for secret messages to tell me new things . Things to do about the gas shortage. Or what to do to extend the food supply. I worry about fresh water. I think that someone is trying to poison me. Is this really my life?

This is getting worse. It is not simply that I am an imposter in my life. My life simply has slid away from my grasp. This is another life that is not mine. And I will eventually start to live this life.

All this is so extraordinary. I am so little connected to the life that I live everyday that it will be taken from me. I see people acting out on TV. I will become one of these people and follow the scripts that they follow.

I just want to be turned on. To live the thrill for its own sake. I am becoming like this guy I know who performs tricks for blow.

“Can you stand on your head?” he is asked.

“How about giving me head?”

He is hesitant.

“It's OK as long as you don't swallow. Then you're not really participating.

I still want to enter the kingdom of heaven. I am committed not to swallow. I am so afraid that I am missing something. I need to be everywhere at once. It is my weakness. Some people think where they are is where it's happening. I know it's happening where I am not. I want to be there. My life is what is happening without me. There is so much going on, that I will never catch up.

I am beginning to enumerate all the CD's in my collection. For the next year, I sleepwalk through my life. I need something more than this. I can barely go to class without thinking how useless this all is. I am getting even better at design. I am learning how to make web sites. I wonder what I need college for.

“I want to take some time off,” I tell my mother.

“That's not how I did things. I got my degrees, I got a good job. What are you going to do?”

“I've been selling things on Ebay. I've been doing website for people I know.”

She tells me, “If you're not in school, I'm going to charge you room and board.”

“I still haven't quit. But I do need time off.”

She lets me cut back on the number of classes that I am taking. I don't want to make it seem that I am drifting. I go see so many band. I keep thinking it would be cool to get involved in music. I don't play. But I want to learn the business.

At the next show at Echo Lounge, I get there early. I hate it how they mark our hands with a big X. This says that we are too young too drink inside. Of course, everyone that I know is a teen alcoholic. Prohibition is so stupid.

I start to talk to the sound guy.

“Sure, stop on by my place. I can show you some stuff.”



The next week, I go over to Luke's. He is recording a band. He shows me how he places the mics. He then runs the board for me. I am learning how he sets levels. He demonstrates how he gets the sound recorded on computer.

I start to help out at his studio. It's not for money. But he teaches me all kinds of stuff. "Maybe, I can do sound at Echo one day."

That weekend he gets me in free for the show. I watch how he does things at sound check. He teaches me mic placement on the drums. I hear how a slight adjustment makes so much difference at giving the right impression of the band.

Luke helps me understand how a band can use monitors to its advantage.

"Some bands just want to blow the stage up. It's about using the monitors to hear yourself on stage. Let the PA do the job for the house. Turn it down. That's why bands hate sound engineers. They want to get too crazy. If they just toned it down, then they could do it all without feedback. Then they could actually hear themselves in the monitors."

I really like to get involved. I want to do more. I tell my mother about how I am learning about sound mixing.

"You know about band guys. They're all heroin addicts."

I correct her, "Didn't you used to date band guys before you hung around with Dad?"

She answers, "Don't use my past against me. Look how far I've come since then. You don't want to waste your life away."

And I thought that I was the imposter. She has forgotten who she used to be. I don't want to become like her. I don't want to lose my origins.

She is afraid that I'll find myself at 35 without any real skills. But I look at Luke. He has a house. He has a fun job. I can't imagine being imprisoned in an office all day.

I know that I'm supposed to transfer to Georgia State after I finish community college. I'm just not sure if I'm ready.

It's scary being an adult. You start out with such dreams. Then you put on that suit, and your dreams become memories. The costume tells you how to act. And then even the memories become memories. I don't want to become like that.

Melissa and I hardly communicate. When she first goes away, we talk on the phone and email. But then the distance becomes too much. I feel that there is always this pause in our conversations. This is where real life is going on. She is fading from me. It's just like one of my mother's memories. Eventually it will only be part of a story.

Maybe that is all for the best. Otherwise, I would only lose myself in my obsession. I've got things going on in my life. I have to be part of it. I don't want to drown in my own bile.

I am looking at a picture of Melissa on the computer. I remember the first time that I saw her. She seemed so intimidating. I had heard rumor about her. That only added to the mystique. I am trying to draw back that moment. But time is just hurtling past me. My life. I need to slow it down. I feel as if I am late for my own funeral. Wake me up when it's over.

When I sleep, I can sense someone watching over me. This is who I really am. It is just like I am with Melissa. I am watching her on my computer. And someone else is watching me on a screen. The I that I really am. I am doing everything that I can to twist around in time and just see this face.

After working with Luke, my mother starts to see that my plans are not so far-fetched. I

am actually earning money. Not much. But it is a beginning. I am eventually able to convince her that I can take a semester off from school.

She tells me, "I've got a friend in California. I could ask her to see if she knows anyone in the music industry. That would be a great opportunity for you."

Wow! I've had all these bad thoughts about my mother. Now I want to take them all back. I love you, Mom.

That night I have the strangest dream. I get a phone call from my Dad. He wants to meet me at some strip mall. I mapquest the directions. I end up at this weird restaurant. Everyone is eating lying on their back. I keep asking about the turn off for the mall. No one seems to know where it is.

The waiter tells me, "Just like back and it will all make sense to you." I can't lie down. I have to find my father.

I ask in a loud voice, "Does anyone here knows where my father is?"

No one notices me. They all keep on eating. Outside the restaurant everyone is lined up for a parade. There is this guy who looks like Richard Nixon. He is in a short-sleeved shirt and baggy pants.

"We've all done some things wrong. But we've been forgiven. You just have to have it in your heart to forgive."

I inform him, "I'm looking for my father."

He tells me, "Aren't we all?"

"I really have to find him!" I scream at him.

"Do you have directions?" he wonders.

I show him my directions. "These are useless. They're all wrong."

He tells me to go down the street that the parade is supposed to be on. "It's going to be a little bit of a drive. You have to get going before the police block off the road."

But the road is already blocked off. I need an alternative. I try to go parallel with the main street. But the street that I am on back around and goes the other way. I feel as if the clock is running down and I will never make the delivery.

It keeps on like this for hours. Finally, I get to mall. I don't know how I got out of the maze. My father is in an empty coffee shop.

"I was about to leave. I've been waiting for hours for you."

He is exaggerating.

"I got lost," I tell him.

"You're always getting lost. I told you to go to law school. You need some kind of direction in your life."

"I'm doing what I can." I tell him.

"Well, you're time is up. I need to go. If only you had come sooner."

"There was this parade blocking the way."

He stands off and waves his arms. "It's my send off parade. I'm going into space." A limo comes and pick him up.

When I wake up, I don't want to do anything but lie there. I have hardly seen my Dad since he left. At first, I thought it was something that I did. Or something that my mother did. But he just moved to Seattle. He still sends me letters and some money now and then. That is it.

I don't feel as if I miss my father. It just reminds me of everything that happened with Melissa. Like any dream, it wears off as the daylight grows brighter.

I am thinking about a trip to California. I hope that it happens. I need something to life my spirits.

After an early show at Echo, I head over to the vegan restaurant. Lauren and Emily are there. They are big Strokes' fans.

"I might go to California to learn recording."

Emily says, "Cool."

Lauren tells us, "My brother works on a TV show out there. He's a writer. Maybe you can meet him."

Emily asks, "Are you going to see any shows? Black Rebel or Brian Jonestown?"

"I don't know if I'm even going."

Lauren says, "If you go, you're going to need a plan. You don't want to miss something good."

"You may not be able to get into some shows. You're not twenty one."

"Yes, I am." I tell them. I had my birthday a month ago.

It was such a non-event for me. Maybe that's why I'm starting to think about my life in such a deep way. I know that I'm getting older.

One day is a year!