

Excerpt – *Leslie's Journal*

Two days to Saturday. This is worse than waiting for Christmas. Why does time go by so slowly?

Ms. Graham is not looking too good today. Ernie Boulder has been organizing book drops, and it's getting to her. It all started when Ms. Graham made Ernie sit front-row centre where she could "keep an eye on him" because he was always talking. Everyone can see him now, though, and every day when her back is turned he gives a signal and we all drop our books on the floor -- BOOM -- and watch her jump. She could be a jumper in the Olympics. I mean, she jumps so high I'm surprised her head doesn't go through the ceiling. I can just picture it: Ms. Graham trapped up there with her head stuck through the acoustic tiles, kicking her legs while Ernie looks up her dress.

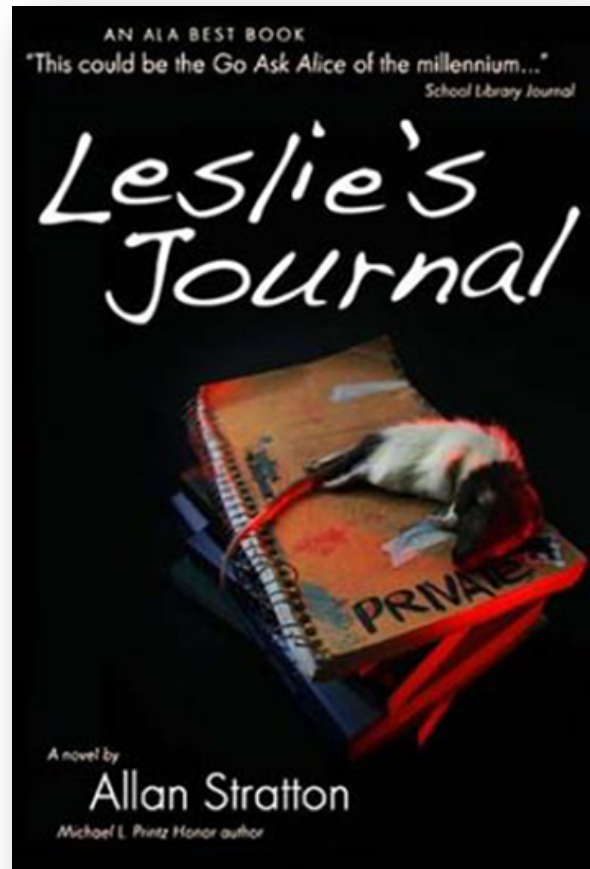
A confession. I don't do the book drop thing. Maybe I'm turning into a suck. It's just that even if Ms. Graham is boring, she's basically okay. At least she's not mean like some other teachers, and if we're not careful she'll get sick again and who knows who we'll get for a supply.

It is still two days to Saturday.

Ms. Graham has written some instructions on the board. She is sitting at her desk pretending to mark but her pen isn't moving and neither are her eyes. She's just staring. I don't think she's going to teach today.

The other girls are so impressed about me being picked by Jason. Except, of course, for Ashley A-hole, who goes around pretending she'd never go out with a senior, that only a slut would do that. Eat your heart out is all I can say.

Actually, how could anyone not go out with Jason? The guy is terminally cool. Today, when I see him in the hall he winks, points his finger at me like it's a gun, grins and mouths the word "Saturday." So I wink, point my finger at him, grin and mouth "Saturday" right back. Then we both walk away like we're spies who've just passed a message in some secret code. Did I say walk? I feel more like I'm floating.



Our names sound good together, too. Jason and Leslie McCready. Ms. Leslie McCready. I like McCready way more than my own last name. Phillips. My family was named after a screwdriver.

Argh! This is so 'girlie', writing my name like I'm married to him. Talk about embarrassing. I used to see other girls do it and I'd laugh. Is true love acting stupid and not being able to stop?

I don't know. I mean I've never been like this before -- 'girlie' romantic -- not even when I was little playing with dolls. Like back in grade four, Katie's favourite thing each Saturday was marrying Barbie and Ken and having them go on honeymoons to smoochie places like Niagara Falls or the Bahamas. Except she'd never let them have sex because she said they hadn't been married long enough. Well no smoochie getaways for me. When it was my turn to pick a honeymoon I'd have Barbie and Ken go on adventures. They'd scuba in the bathtub. Or skydive off the balcony with serviettes taped to their hands for parachutes.

The last time we played honeymoon, Mrs. Kincaid was out getting her hair done and I had them go on an African safari in the oven. Katie screamed when they started to melt. "You murdered them!" she cried, holding Barbie and Ken in her mother's oven mitts.

It was kind of true. Barbie's eyes were running down her face and her hair was this goo mixed in with what used to be Ken's feet. But I wasn't about to let that spoil a good honeymoon. "If they're dead, we better give them a funeral," I said. "You can be the minister and say a prayer." The idea of being a minister cheered Katie right up. She gave a long speech about Barbie's good deeds as a missionary and her tragic love for Ken and then we buried them in the garden. The next week, we dug them up and played *Zombie Barbie*, but that's another story.

Anyway, the whole long point of this is that Jason is the first guy I've ever felt "that way" about. Sure, I've talked dirty about boys, but more to shock people than anything else. Even hitting puberty didn't make me stupid.

But with Jason, I finally get what all the fuss is about. When he kissed me on the football field - - well just thinking about it gives me a funny feeling and things start to tingle in a way that's really amazing. Believe it or not, that was my very first French kiss. The truth is, even though I'm almost sixteen, I'm not experienced at all, except about making stuff up.

See guys don't really like me. I scare them. They like to feel they're in control, but with me, well let's face it, they never know what's going to come out of my mouth next. News flash: neither do I.

This scoop would give my Mom a heart attack. Every time I come home late or get caught sneaking out after she's gone to bed, she's certain it's to see some boy. I get back and there she is, sitting at the kitchen table in her housecoat. Sometimes she's Volcano Mom ("WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO, YOUNG LADY?"), but mostly she's Long-Suffering Mom, wiping away tears with a box of Kleenex, trying to make me feel guilty.

See, Mom is afraid I'm going to end up pregnant. She's especially worried when I get home smelling of beer. "What's his name?" she yells, as if you need a boy to get drunk. All you need is to crash a house party. "Do you know about AIDS? Do you know about condoms?" She throws such big production numbers I swear she oughta be in show business.

And she always leaves magazines around open to stories about the tragedy of teen moms. Honestly, I think she watches too much Oprah.

I want to say, "Look, Mom, stop being so embarrassing. There is no boy. There's never been a boy. I haven't even had a date!" But she won't let me get a word in edge-wise. So fine. If she gets off on worrying, let her. She doesn't need me to torture her -- she can do it herself. Besides, actually talking to her would be awful. She doesn't really want to know about my sex life any more than I really want to know about her sex life.

Lying about boyfriends to the girls is trickier. I can't let them think I don't have one. So when everybody's talking about their big throb I invent one. They have names like Jerry and Trevor and Andy and are always mysterious, guys from far away who can be ditched whenever there start to be too many questions, like when's he going to drop by the school for a visit.

I also fake it when the conversation gets around to 'how far I've gone'. Katie's crowd comes to me for advice, because they've never gone further than sweaty hand-holding and lip kissing. ("Frenching!" Katie makes a face, "That's so gross, I want to brush my teeth just thinking about it.") When the other girls ask me how to do it, I just say, "Wouldn't you like to know?" and bat my eyes and fan my face and they get too embarrassed to ask more.

The only person I've ever told the truth about me and boys is Katie. I love Katie but boy does she have a big mouth. She blabbed to Ashley last summer at that stupid youth leadership training camp and as soon as they got back Ashley ran around and told everybody. Needless to say, the next time the topic of boys came up and I mentioned I'd met this guy called Ricky at my Dad's apartment building the girls all gave me these funny looks.

Well right away Katie turned red and her eyes popped and I knew what had happened. But I didn't crack. Instead, I laughed and said in a really loud voice, "Let me guess? Ashley's pretending to be an expert on my sex life, right?" And then I turned to Ashley and practically shouted, "You are such a pathetic baby, Ashley Walker. Who are you to talk about anybody? You can't even say the word 'Penis'. Say it, Ashley! Penis. Penis, Penis, Penis!!!"

Seeing as we were hanging around the mall at the time, I got a lot of attention. I also made Ashley cry. In fact, I made her cry for a couple of weeks after that, because the next day I snuck into the guy's washroom at Mister Pizza's and wrote on the wall in magic marker "For a good time call Ashley Walker" and her phone number. Serves her right.

Getting even was one thing, but I was still really worried about what the other girls thought. That's why frenching with Jason in broad daylight was extra fantastic.

Jason, you are my dream come true! But will I be his dream come true?

He'll probably be expecting me to be experienced, and I'm still wondering how far is too far on a first date. In one of Ann Lander's columns, which Mom so considerately put in front of my orange juice one morning, it said, "Guys don't buy books they can take out of the library." Yeah, well even bookstores let guys take books off the shelf. The real question is how many chapters do you let them read? And speaking of 'reading', Ann, don't you think us girls want to do a little reading too?

Worrying about what to do is bad enough. But even worse is worrying about how to do it. Even simple stuff like kissing. That time on the football field doesn't count, because it happened so fast and out of the blue I didn't have a chance to tense up. But knowing it's coming is a different story.

Your reputation can get ruined in one night. Back in grade eight, Cheryl got a reputation for just lying there. Ever since guys call her 'Slug Tongue'. And then there's Debby Grace. She bit into Tommy Campbell's lip so bad it bled and swelled up. So now she's Cannibal girl. How a person kisses can affect their whole life.

Maybe I should stay home from school tomorrow. That way I can practice kissing in front of the bathroom mirror. Also, I can make sure I don't catch a cold. I mean Saturday has to be perfect, and kissing with a runny nose -- well, can you imagine?