

the
**RACHEL
RILEY**

Diaries

THE
TIME
OF MY
LIFE

Not suitable for
younger readers.





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JOANNA NADIN

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For small-town girls everywhere.



I'm RACHEL RILEY
- welcome to my so-called life.

January



Thursday 1 New Years Day

This is typical. I spend months eschewing fiction and fairy tales in pursuit of cold, hard, facts, only to realize I am, in fact, still in love with Jack. And so I rush to the Stones' superhero-themed 'Jack is back/we're adopting an ethnic minority (i.e. Irish) baby' New Year's Eve party to tell him this joyous news, only to discover the following devastating fact: Jack is in love with someone else.

This time it is someone called Maya who he met when he was digging wells in Guatemala. She is probably a willowy indigenous beauty with almond eyes and cascading hair. While I am a midget with borderline ginger hair that has never done anything remotely resembling cascading. Mostly it just sits on my head looking mental.

I cannot believe I ever said being me was brilliant. It is the utter opposite. I lead a pointless and fruitless existence. Like a leaf blower. Or a nun. I am not even going to bother making any New Year's resolutions. They will only end in tears and disappointment.

And possibly a ban and a shouting from Mum. She has already vetoed several of James's and Dad's before they have even begun, e.g.:

- 1 I will become the world's first merboy (James).
- 2 I will rearrange the bookcase on a new points-based system, according to number of killings, and presence of mythical creatures (ten points for *Lord*





of the Rings, nul points for Five on Kirrin Island)
(James).

- 3 I will do more of what I like on Sundays, as it is, in fact, the Day of Rest (Dad).
- 4 I will teach the dog to sniff drugs and revive the fortunes of the House of Riley by renting it out to PC Doone (James).
- 5 I will have a well-earned beer when I get in from work even if it is only Tuesday and not yet six o'clock (Dad).

Mum is right about number 4 though. There is no way the dog is going to be able to identify drugs. It will only eat them. And the thought of the dog having swallowed a kilo of amphetamines is mind-boggling.

Uncle Jim is wise to stay out of the hoo-hah. He is still too depressed over his wife Marigold leaving him halfway up a Himalaya for an accountant from Chipping Sodbury. He had better find his mojo soon (lust for life kind, not normal pants-based lust kind) or Mum will do some resolving for him. She has done one for Dad, i.e. 'Make more effort at work.' She is worried that Wainwright and Beacham will be next in line for cutbacks and will be separating the wheat from chaff. She is definitely of the opinion that Dad is chaff. Am leaving before she can impose anything on me. Will go round to Sad Ed's house. However Sylvia Plath-like I feel, Sad Ed is always worse. Oooh, maybe he has revived his resolution to die an untimely tragic death and go down in music legend. Though he should probably try to work





a bit more on the music side of this equation first. At the moment his Bontempi-playing is less than legendary.

4 p.m.

Yet more proof that I am doomed. Sad Ed is not depressed at all. In fact he is utterly jubilant. He snogged Scarlet at the party last night and it turns out his mojo (pants one, not lust for life one) was right all along and she is his ONE. I asked if his feelings were reciprocated. He said he is not sure because then she passed out due to excessive consumption of something called a Flaming Mojito. I said it is amazing Bob and Suzy are being allowed a baby when they have utterly failed to advise their eighteen-year-old daughter of the perils of alcohol. Sad Ed said it was Suzy who gave her the drink in the first place, and, *au contraire*, she is the very definition of earth motherhood and he cannot wait until he weds Scarlet and she adopts him as a son-in-law (this is because his own mum is practically a pensioner and Deputy Chair of the Aled Jones fan club (Essex branch)). I said this is unlikely to happen given Scarlet's feelings on marriage, i.e. it is the province of small-minded right-winged suburbanites whose only ambition in life is to perpetuate the same tedious mistakes of their parents. Sad Ed was undeterred though (which is completely out of character. Usually he is deterred before he even thinks of what it is he doesn't want to do) and begged me to go to Scarlet's to find out if her mojo is similarly excited. I said I will go tomorrow. When she has stopped vomiting. And when Jack





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is back in Guatemala being reunited with his irritatingly worldly and exotic girlfriend and cannot look down on my tragic normality and small-town hair.

Friday 2

Ugh. I knew it. Sad Ed's kissing was more potent than I thought. Scarlet says she has found her ONE too. Though interestingly she does not actually know who her ONE is, or was, due to there being too many Flaming Mojitos inside her and too many Batmen at the party. I said surely she could tell who was who inside the unforgiving Lycra suits (one is gargantuan for God's sake) but she says no, it is a complete mystery, but she is pretty sure it must have been her ex, i.e. Trevor Pledger (head goth, owner of floor-length vegetarian leather coat, currently on gap year at the shuttlecock factory). I pointed out he was still going out with minigoth Tamsin Bacon according to Melody Bean (also a minigoth, has a tarantula called Arthur, once engaged to Sad Ed), but Scarlet says details like that are meaningless in the face of true love. Asked if she had considered for a minute that her true love might in fact be an enormous manic depressive with upper arm issues and an obsession with drowning himself in the shopping-trolley-clogged River Slade. She said no, if it is not Trevor, which it is, then it is more likely to be the third, as yet unidentified, Batman, as there is no way Sad Ed is the key to her fulfilment.





Left at the mention of fulfilment. This is what having a TV sex guru and an abortionist as parents does to you.

On the plus side, there was no sign of Jack so can assume he is safely back in Chichicastenango. His absence can only aid my getting over him, i.e. out of sight, out of mind. Although right now he is very much contaminating my mind with missed-opportunity love thoughts. Why, oh why has his fickle pelvis fallen at the first sight of exotic non-Walden-based beauty? If only he had stayed here for his gap year, and dug wells for impoverished people on the Whiteshot Estate we could very well be in each other's arms right now. As it is am going to have to content self with seasonal edition of *Holby City*.

Saturday 3

Have been to Waitrose car park, i.e. trolley herding arena, to tell Ed the devastating news. He is, yet again, undeterred, and says he is being philosophical about the situation, i.e. it is better that she is disbelieving of the potential of his pants-based area. If we insist it was him, she may reject him for good, and claim drink addled her judgement. This way, she will slowly come to her senses, realize her fate, and fall into his manly arms (he got an Abs-buster for Christmas).

I miss the old, deterred Ed. It was always comforting to know someone was more suicidal than you. I blame Reuben





Tull (fellow trolley herder, part-time philosopher, full-time drug enthusiast). He has been filling Sad Ed's head with mumbo jumbo about Aristotelian halves. And possibly filling the back pocket of his XL combat trousers with 'herbal' remedies.

Sunday 4

Mum has asked to see progress on my university applications as I am already perilously close to the deadline (two weeks today) and I do not want to risk mine being lost at the bottom of the pile in the ether (she still does not understand the workings of the internet) and losing out to timely applicants who lack my life experience (a Saturday job in lentil-smelling health food outlet Nuts in May). I said, 'What application?' She said, 'Ha ha.' (She has resolved to try to appreciate jokes, and see the funny side of life more, instead of foretelling doom and panicking over stains and bacteria. I could tell she was faking it though. Her lips were almost non-existent.)

She is right to be suspicious. I have not even written a personal statement. Mostly because I forgot due to the Mr Pringle trauma at the end of last year, and the Jack trauma at the beginning of this one. Though I shall say it is a stand against societal norms, and also because there is no point in me even trying because I will only be rejected by real





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universities and end up doing accounting at Essex College of Further Education.

James for once is on my side. He says in any two-child family there is always an alpha sibling and a beta sibling and it is clear he is the alpha one as he is superior physically, intellectually and morally. He then went back to trying to persuade the dog to track down a packet of Junior Disprin he had hidden in his display of Middleworld crap. Mum will go mental when she finds out he has disobeyed her veto. Dad is already in trouble for trying to get out of de-clogging the drain by claiming it is his right to a day of reading newspapers and watching televised sport. She says he can go back to women's gymnastics once he has removed the persistent clot of dog/me hair from the U-bend.

On the plus side, only thought about Jack forty-seven times today. Which sounds excessive, but is down by five on yesterday. Plus am trying aversion therapy, i.e. imagining Jack snogging indigenous beauty Maya in bid to revolt self at any thought of him. So far am mostly just dissolving into tears instead.

10 p.m.

Partial success! Have been definitely revolted by thought of Jack. Though is possibly down to me giving him mullet hairstyle and bad breath for added repulsion.

