

PAUL & JULIANA

Richard Hawley



Baltimore, MD

Copyright 2003 Richard Hawley
All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by electronic means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote passages in a review. The people and events depicted in "Paul & Juliana" are fictional. Any resemblance to people, living or dead, or to events is unintentional and coincidental.

Published by Bancroft Press ("Books that Enlighten")
P.O. Box 65360, Baltimore, MD 21209
800-637-7377
410-764-1967 (fax)
bruceb@bancroftpress.com
www.bancroftpress.com

Cover and interior design by Tammy S. Grimes
Crescent Communications, www.tsgcrescent.com
Author photo by Jean Schnell

ISBN 1-890862-33-9
Library of Congress Control Number: 2003109115
Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

To
Kim & Greg

WHO KNOW THIS TERRITORY

CHAPTER ONE

“Can you see a young lady for college guidance?”

Betts Storey, secretary to the Guidance Department, liked Lawrence. She knew his responsibility was testing and measurement, not college guidance, but because two of the three college counselors were out of the office and the third was with a student, she decided to ask.

Lawrence considered declining. He was scoring and annotating a batch of vocational preference tests he had administered that morning. A boy, a junior, was scheduled to arrive in forty minutes to discuss the irregular results of his PSAT test. There was time to see the girl, although Lawrence always found it awkward talking about colleges or about adolescent futures. But why should the girl wait?

“Sure. Would you bring me her file? And tell her I’ll see her in a minute.”

Lawrence swiveled his chair toward the window. Outside, the lawn, strewn with curled elm leaves, fell away gently to the walkway and the street. The sky was glassy blue against the yellows and reds of the October trees. Afternoon light bright-

ened the metallic finish of the parked cars and bicycles in the rack. There was no figure in the landscape. All was bright and still.

Betts Storey placed a manila folder on his desk. "Juliana Franck," she said, and left before Lawrence could swivel back to face her.

Lawrence looked at the blue identifying tape on the file's flap. He noted the ck ending of the surname, like the composer's. He opened the file and began to read the parents' names and occupations, and the names and ages of siblings. Lawrence suddenly felt irresistibly tired. He would have liked to lean back, shut his eyes, and sleep for an hour. He closed the file, looked again into the afternoon light, then told Betts Storey over the intercom to ask the girl to come in.

Lawrence did not like to talk to students from behind his desk. As he rose to take the upholstered two-seater at the front of the office, the door opened, and in this uncharacteristically expectant posture, he greeted Juliana Franck.

"Mr. Lawrence?" she said, her smile suggesting that something hilarious had just occurred, or perhaps was about to occur.

"I am he," said Lawrence, with a friendly, exaggerated formality.

He inclined slightly at the waist and shook her hand. Lawrence asked the girl to be seated on one of the uphol-

stered chairs facing the two-seater. She thanked him but remained standing for a moment, preoccupied by the framed picture over the bookshelves.

“Sorry!” she said lightly, seating herself and smiling broadly again. “I’m Juliana Franck. That’s a wonderful painting. What is it?”

Lawrence felt uneasy. The girl’s beauty, so finished and so bright, had caught him by surprise. He cast an eye up to the framed print. She was right. The spindly-legged gothic youth and his maid formed a pleasing composition against the foliage of a stylized glade.

“It’s called *The Swabian Lovers*, and it’s by an unknown German artist of the 1400s. I got it in Cleveland of all places.”

“It’s perfect,” said Juliana Franck, turning again to the picture. “Can’t you just imagine them?”

“Mm,” said Lawrence. “I think the picture’s supposed to represent an idea. Probably ‘courtly love.’”

“Oh,” said Juliana, again the suggestion of humor in her widened eyes.

“What can I do for you?”

“Ah,” the girl began with what seemed to Lawrence like a practiced relish. “I have a college problem. I want to study in the city—Columbia, if they accept me—but my parents think I’ll be in danger there. They want me to go to a nice, safe, out-of-the-way college—one with a conservatory.”

“Are you musical?”

“I play the cello.”

Lawrence entertained an image of this striking girl playing the cello—her shining black hair, center-parted, falling slightly forward around her cheeks, her mouth pursed in concentration, her gothic form draped with a severe white blouse on top, a long black skirt below, knees bowed to accommodate her lacquered, burnished cello.

“Are you serious about it?” Lawrence asked.

Juliana brightened. “Yes! I suppose I am, but not serious enough for a conservatory or a career. Probably not good enough, either.”

“Do you play with the school orchestra?”

“There isn’t one, is there?”

“Well, actually—I should know that, shouldn’t I?” Lawrence felt himself starting to laugh.

“I do play with the Ravinia Youth Orchestra—and with my family constantly. And I study with Nadia Godine. Do you know her? She’s the first chair in the Chicago Symphony.”

“No, I don’t know her. So you’re a serious musician.”

“No, I like the cello, but it’s just friendly. Maybe that’s the problem—I’m not serious.”

“Except about Columbia.”

“Sort of serious about Columbia. New York seems wonderful, at least when I’ve been there—the beautiful end of the

park where the Plaza and the big hotels are, by Tiffany's on Fifth Avenue—"

"That's not where Columbia is."

Does she remind me of somebody, Lawrence thought, *or is she all new?*

"No," she said. "Columbia's way up there. But I like that, too."

"But your parents don't."

"They don't seem to, for me."

"Mm. Where did they study?"

"Columbia!" Juliana said. "My father did. My mother went to Barnard and finished at Columbia. They went to school first in Austria, in Vienna, where their families lived."

"So you're first-generation native American," said Lawrence.

Juliana smiled. "That's me." Lawrence saw what it was about her smile. As the corners of her full mouth turned up, the corners of her eyes crinkled upward in lovely parallel angles. Involuntarily, Lawrence said to himself: *You're such a lady.*

"So how can I help you?" Lawrence asked.

"Ah—let's see," Juliana said. "Aren't *you* supposed to know that? My mother and father suggested I come in. I'm *in need of guidance*. Don't I sound in need of guidance to you?"

"I've seen more desperate cases."

“Oh, good!” said Juliana. “Do you think Columbia is all right?”

“It may be all right,” began Lawrence.

“Oh, good! Then—”

“But, along with your parents, I might also recommend Oberlin, Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and the University of Rochester. All three are actually more than all right, and they all have conservatories attached to them.”

“Oh, dear,” said Juliana. “I hope you won’t tell my parents about them. They sound exactly like the kinds of places they’ve been discussing.”

“For that matter,” Lawrence continued, “if you’re good enough to get into Columbia, you might have a look at Princeton, too. Princeton has a terrific music department, although you might find it a little far out, a little experimental. Princeton is also very pretty. You’re probably less likely to be mauled or killed there than at Columbia.”

“Do you really think Columbia is that bad? My mother and father do.” Juliana seemed at least politely serious now.

“Maybe I’ve overstated it,” Lawrence said. “But New York City is not like Evanston.”

“It’s probably like Chicago,” Juliana said thoughtfully.

“That’s good,” Lawrence said, glad of the analogy. “I think Columbia is a lot like the University of Chicago, especially for undergraduates.”

“Oh, dear,” said Juliana distractedly. “This is not at all what I wanted to hear. Cruel, objective guidance.” Juliana smiled wonderfully, then rose to go. “Thanks very much for seeing me without any notice, Mr. Lawrence. I’ll bet you were busy. I may call on you again soon. I think I have to fortify my plan.”

“It probably wouldn’t hurt to give the issue some thought. You have plenty of time.”

“Oh, that’s good to hear. I keep feeling as if I don’t have any. Goodbye, Mr. Lawrence, and thanks for the guidance.”

“You’re very welcome—oh, just one thing. I hope you’re clear about what I did and did not recommend. I recommended looking around and thinking it over. I don’t think Columbia is a bad university or a bad place for you to study. Do you understand that?”

“Yes, I do—and I’m glad. I may come back to bother you. Bye. Enjoy your picture.” She gave Lawrence a smile, her warmest, in parting.

Lawrence seated himself at his desk and reopened Juliana’s file. The inch-square photograph attached to the cover of the permanent record card captured the likeness, while exaggerating somewhat the angles of chin and cheekbones, the blackness of hair and eyes. The smile was true—open and warming—but with a crinkly suggestion of an understood, and perhaps shared, hilarity.

Lawrence turned the card over and noted, in addition to

her derived IQ (136) and PSATs (72 verbal, 61 math), the series of photos of her as a ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grader. She was there in each of them, he realized, but a little less beaky and less fawnlike with each successive year. Juliana Franck. The angles of her face, the light in her eyes, her crisp diction, appropriate wit, the ease of her laughter, the very music of her name—it all cohered.

Lawrence turned the record card over to the front. Her uniformly good grades, recorded by quarter, semester, and year, seemed to dull his impression of her. His gaze rose to the personal data typed in at the top of the card. Columbia and Barnard were listed under Parents' Education. Her mother's occupation was recorded as Housewife/Restaurant Reviewer. Her father's was shown as Executive, Hart Schaffner and Marx. Three sisters were named, all younger. Lawrence noted the address: a quiet, well-settled street a block or two from the university stadium, a street he frequently walked after dark. He felt unexplainably happy to know she lived so close.

"The Berrisford boy stopped by," said Betts Storey over the intercom. "He went to his locker and said he'll be back in five minutes."

"Okay. Will you bring me his file before he comes?"

Beyond the window, two brightly dressed girls, clutching books to their chests, ambled slowly along the leaf-covered walk. Lawrence's thoughts returned to Juliana Franck.

Betts Storey entered, extracted Juliana's file from the out-tray, and placed another manila file in the center of his blotter. "Berrisford, Paul," she said.

"Thanks, Betts. Could you hold him off for a bit while I look this over?"

Lawrence could not quite recall why he had made this appointment. Inside the file, clipped to the permanent record card, was a penciled note in his own hand. "Sections not completed, 10th grade PSAT. See before Jr. PSAT date."

He remembered now. He flipped over the card and noted the sophomore PSAT scores: verbal 52, math 20. The derived IQ scores from middle school and high school were 145 and 152. 152! An individually administered Wechsler IQ battery had been given the boy the past spring, Lawrence noted. There were no photographs on the card. Rummaging back into the file, Lawrence saw a small school photo appended to the boy's middle school transcript. It showed a cute boy-pretty face under a messy tousle of hair. The boy's teeth had come in strikingly large.

Lawrence was suddenly aware that he had lost track of time. The boy, Paul Berrisford, would be waiting outside. Lawrence thumbed quickly to the last sheet in the folder—a duplicate PSAT answer form he had received from the College Board at Princeton. He looked dully at the grid with its nonsense patterns of darkened-in circles.

Then he saw what he was looking for. The columns given over to the mathematics questions had been untouched. Lawrence looked once more, closely, at the photo of the disheveled seventh-grader.

“Would you send Paul Berrisford in, please?” he asked over the intercom.

Lawrence rose and opened the office door.

“Paul Berrisford?”

“Hi.”

Lawrence shook hands with a rangy youth. His hair, though trimmed neatly around the ears and neck, was wildly unkempt, its matted brown-and-blond streaks falling haphazardly on either side of the faintest suggestion of a part. Ruddy, trim, and smooth-cheeked, the boy glowed with health. His large-mouthed smile—formed by prominent, good teeth—indicated some apprehension.

“Why not sit down over here?” Lawrence motioned to the two-seater.

“Okay.”

“Have you any idea why I asked to see you?”

“No, not really—something about college?”

“No. Not yet. It’s about the PSATs coming up. Do you remember taking the practice test last year?”

Paul Berrisford widened his eyes in exaggerated reflection. “Um—practice test? Right! I’m sure I took it, but I can’t real-

ly remember.”

“Yes, you did take the test. It’s normally a junior-year test, but we give it to the sophomores as a practice test. It gives you a chance to see what a PSAT is like, and it sometimes tells us something about strengths and weaknesses.” Lawrence paused. “You don’t remember it? It takes the better part of a morning.”

“No, I’m sorry, I don’t.”

Lawrence noted that, in a distinctively careless way, the boy was well dressed. Worn, clean, buff-colored corduroy trousers fell over a pair of ankle-length hunting boots. He wore a new-looking herringbone jacket over an equally striking flannel shirt, the collar tabs of which stuck out rakishly from the heavy cloth of the jacket’s lapels. It occurred to Lawrence that not since Yale had he seen a youth wearing a sports jacket for casual attire. So far as Lawrence was aware, that particular prep school convention had never enjoyed a vogue at the high school.

“The reason I wanted to see you is that your performance on last year’s PSAT was irregular. You don’t seem to have done any of the math questions.”

“Okay—now I remember that test. The long one with the math and verbal parts—the College Board?”

“That’s the one,” said Lawrence. “And you seem to have done none of the math questions.”

“Yes. I remember that. That was a terrible morning.”

“Were you ill?”

“No, not ill.” Paul Berrisford shifted his position on the two-seater. There was, Lawrence decided, something leonine about this boy. Like an edgy thoroughbred, he seemed uncomfortable in the confinement of a school office. Perhaps he *was* uncomfortable in the confinement of school. Yes. Even his clothes seemed to be only tentatively related to torso, wrist, and shin.

“When I was taking that test,” Paul continued, “I remember feeling like I wanted to scream. The—”

“Just on the mathematics section?” asked Lawrence.

“No. I didn’t even think about the mathematics part. I had quit by that part. It was the other sections. The paragraphs. Do you know? There are those short paragraphs describing some topic—maybe about the life cycle of butterflies or somebody taking a walk. Then there are about fifteen very nit-picky questions about little points in the paragraph. It felt like being cross-examined about nothing. It was as if they were trying to be intentionally boring. It felt like they were teasing you.”

“The test questions aren’t always interesting.” Lawrence remembered seeing the short essay on butterflies.

“It was probably stupid,” Paul said, “but after about forty-five minutes of that test, I started filling in the answers without looking at the questions. I just couldn’t stand that

squeezed feeling anymore.”

“Did you feel especially squeezed about math?”

“No. I don’t mind math. In fact, I think I’m fairly good at math. No, by the time I got to the math section, I just stopped. I was feeling terrible. I just put my head down on the table and stopped.”

“Do you think you’ll feel differently when you take the actual PSAT? Your group is taking it a week from tomorrow.”

“I don’t know.”

“One thing you might think about,” said Lawrence, “is that the PSAT can do you some good if you do well on it. The National Merit Scholarships are based on the pre-SAT score, and being a finalist can give you a boost getting into college.”

Paul Berrisford looked away, toward the window.

“Have you thought at all about college?” Lawrence asked.

“No, I haven’t.”

“The reason I ask is that, as you may know by now, your tested aptitude is very high. If and when you decide to get serious about school work, you’ll have excellent college prospects.”

“Umm.”

Lawrence felt the boy disengaging himself from the interview.

“Where did your parents study?” Lawrence was aware, unpleasantly, that he had asked the same question with pre-

cisely the same words to Juliana Franck an hour earlier.

“My parents? Everywhere. My father is from San Francisco, and he went to Stanford, then to Oxford in England, then to the Chicago Art Institute for some special degree in film. He makes TV commercials.”

Paul revealed this information as if it were not quite agreeable to do so, as if it had been, perhaps painfully, requested of him many times before. “And my mother went to Smith College, then to the Sorbonne in France, then also to the Art Institute. She illustrates children’s books. My three sisters are in college now. Two go to Williams and one just started at Reed in Portland, Oregon.”

“That sounds, among other things, awfully expensive.”

“I guess it is.”

“And what about you, Paul? Haven’t you any college plans?”

“Uh, no, I don’t, I’m afraid.”

Lawrence wished he had looked more systematically through Paul Berrisford’s file. He felt tied up, unhelpful—that he was irritating the boy.

“Are you concerned at all about the squeezed feeling you told me you had during the test?”

“No, I’m okay, I think. It’s just the tests.”

“It sounds to me as if you might be fighting them.”

“Fighting them?” Paul paused to consider. “No, I don’t

think so. I mean, I don't like them, but it's nothing big. Being in a room like that all morning, reading those paragraphs and those comparison tricks—'door is to knob as pitcher is to spout,' you know—it just feels like somebody is fooling around with you. Does that make sense to you?"

Lawrence was touched by the sincerity of the boy's question.

"I think it does. Tell me more."

"I may actually know what it is. The tests—and this happens sometimes in regular classes—treat you as if you're automatically going to care about them and try hard. As you said before, they're the big credential for college, which you're also supposed to care about automatically. But maybe you don't."

"And *you* don't?"

"You know, I really don't. Maybe something will change, but I just don't. A lot of them, the colleges, are really nice-looking places—I've seen Oxford and Stanford and Williams, and I've been around Northwestern all my life. But it just seems like a lot more time doing set-up exercises. More time standing around."

"You don't think there are important things to learn in colleges?"

"I'm sure there are things to learn. It's just that—and this may only be true for me—I feel I'm going to learn what I need anyway. I've actually had the feeling—ask my parents, we've

had this out about ten thousand times—that school stops me from learning. School—Chemistry or American Government or the Film as Literature course—makes you *pretend* to learn. I mean, why not watch the greatest movies you can, over and over? Why not work with a crew on a film, then make one yourself? Why all the pretending?”

Lawrence started to answer but quickly caught himself. Increasingly, he found himself entrapped in an agreement with the adolescents assigned to him for counseling. *Do I feel this way more when I'm tired?*

“Excuse me, but what time is it?” Paul asked, lurching forward.

“It’s twenty minutes to four.”

“Oh, my god,” said Paul. “I’ve blown it. I’ve got to run.”

“Yes, we’ve gone past school hours, haven’t we?”

Paul rose up on his toes, stretching. “I’m supposed to be playing the guitar, starting ten minutes ago, at the Northwestern Student Union.”

“I’m sorry. Can I find you a ride?”

“No, thanks, that’s nice of you. I’ve got a bike.”

“Well, good luck. I’m glad to have met you, Paul.”

“You, too. Thanks.”

“Why don’t we talk again? I’d like to hear more about how you see school.”

“Sure,” said Paul, his hand on the knob of the open door.

Lawrence noted again the high color in the boy's cheeks, the almost animal sense of being about to spring. "I'd like that. I could certainly use it."

They shook hands, and Paul Berrisford left the office.