

Daylight

THE AMERICAN FRATERNITY

Psi Rho Ritual Book

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“We shall create Men of Principle. For America’s image the fraternity man will one day be other countries’ image of the American.” —William Archibald Scott

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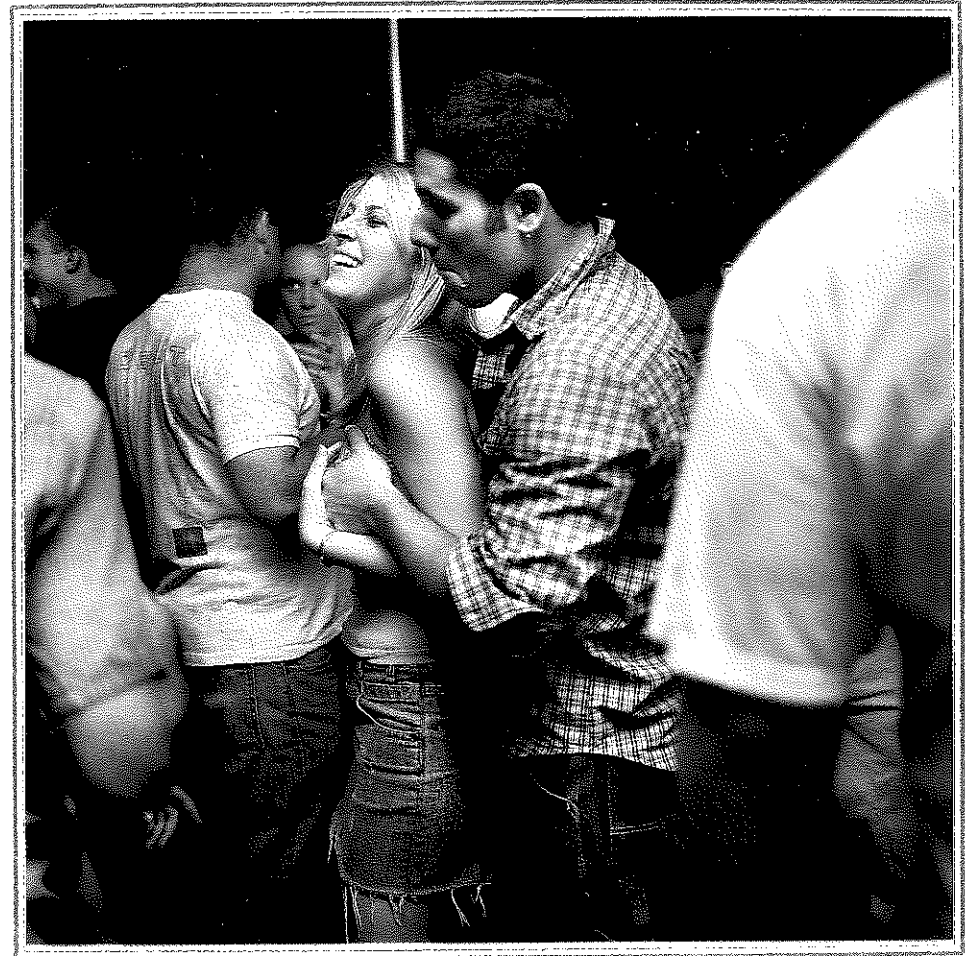
Beta: "Most worshipful God, we thine unworthy creatures, acknowledge Thy loving kindness in vouchsafing us the privilege of assembling in peace and harmony within the walls of our secret Lodge of Psi Rho. Help us to live according to the high ideals of that band of universal Brotherhood at old Schenectady so that the memory and the purposes of the founders may become as sweet incense in the nostrils.

(All join in unison) 'Our father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, and ever, Amen.'"

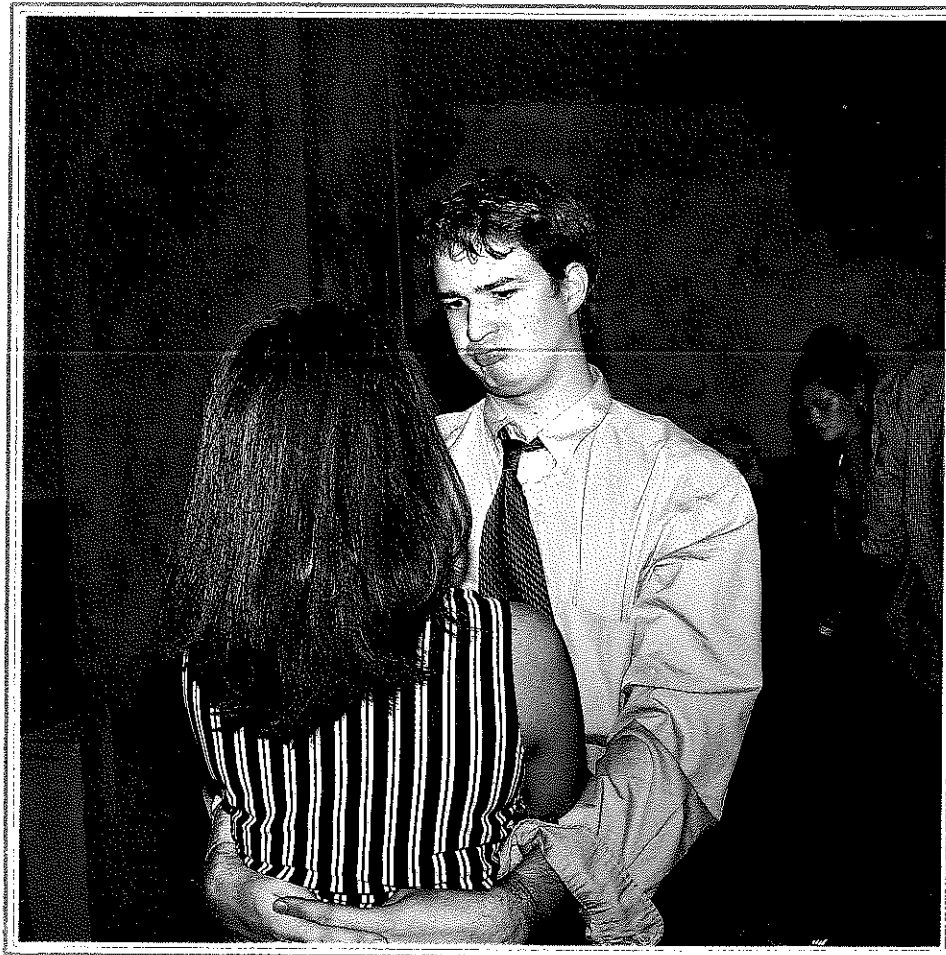
(Alpha gives signal for all members to be seated except officers.) (Officers resume caps.)

Alpha "Brother Delta, What does the first light typify in this symbolic ritual?"

Delta: "This light I kindle *(lighting candle with taper)* in a search for TRUTH. Said the keeper of the Lodge unto the candidate: 'Poor pilgrim, I pity thee that in thy darkness thou canst not see the truth before thee. To be good and to be true is the first lesson in the Ancient Order of Psi Rho. Simplicity and plain dealing distinguish us.'"







GIRLPLAY

Cynthia Robinson

He stands behind her, close, curved into her. He grabs her breast. His expression: libido in overdrive. There is mischief, too, and glee. He's getting away with something. He's *getting* something. Getting *some*.

Of course he is. He's a frat boy.

There is a tautness to her shoulders. A pulling into herself. Eyes closed tight, head thrown back. She is laughing. Tense, not comfortable, like someone being tickled.

She is at a frat party. She has heard, or seen, somehow learned, that this is what girls should expect at frat parties. This is what girls do at frat parties. What they let be done to them. If they want to be invited to more frat parties.

At least she's still standing.

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Others are not. One is crashed on a frat-house couch. Oblivious, out of it, gone. Collapsed between two couples. Girls perched on frat guys' laps, no one paying attention to the prone body lying only inches away. The girls look hopeful: maybe a boyfriend.

And they are infantilized by the daddy's-little-girl lap-sitting. Econ majors, maybe, or future directresses of the EPA. CEOs or CFOs—Google, Uber. Nobel Prize winners, even. But here, on these laps, they are girls. They are passive. Waiting for whatever comes next. Apprehensive of it, maybe, but wanting it too.

The boys look like they *know* what comes next. They've been here before, or watched older boys be here, waiting their turn. They might get some. Or they might just take some.

Each grins knowingly at the girl perched on his knees.

Later maybe one of them will say *She was totally into it, she just passed out.*

Or maybe those words will be said of the other one, dead to the world, on her back, splayed out on a frat-house bed. Still dressed, or maybe redressed (if she makes a complaint, will there be redress?).

Dressed again. That sounds better. In her black pants and halter, maybe silk; they match; she still has her purse, *nice* clothes for a *nice* party. Trouble is the parties all end the same way, all roads lead to Rome.

Lead *there*.

Where the photographer stands, inside the wide forced V of her legs. Her knees are bent at the edge of the bed, feet dangling down. Maybe shoes on her feet, but we can't see that part.

Feet aren't interesting. Faces more so, but in the end, not so much.

That's why the photographer doesn't show hers. He's standing where the frat boys stood, the ones who posed her. (Before? After? Or maybe not this time, she dodged a bullet, they passed her over.)

The photographer stands at crotch level, aims the camera up from *there*.

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At least she wasn't an anatomy lesson, like the one rolled out, naked, across a table like a decadent main course. After first viewing the image, I learned that the woman was a paid guest at the party. A stripper. Which changes the viewing experience—boundaries, I learned, had been established, and respected. No one got hurt, and everyone got paid who should have.

Still, observing the brothers at eye level with tit and ass and cunt, looking guilty and guiltily looking, it's hard to avoid the comparison with boys in the garage with dad's porn stash. Only this one's—they can't be-

lieve their eyes—alive. Breathing. What luck, theirs! Up close and personal with a pussy.

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A few of the pictures involve dogs. I've nothing to say about those—I couldn't bear to look at them. A good question for me: Why can I stomach girls made heartbreakingly vulnerable by too much drink and not the dogs?

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One bro's an artist, maybe he's sweet to his mother. He draws an idealized version of Frat-House Aphrodite, supine on a beach (Frat-House Aphrodite is always supine, or in the process of being made so). Pretty face, prettier than the live ones, who so very badly want to be pretty, want to be beautiful. Who perform whatever parts of beautiful they can.

But they'll never be blow-up-doll pretty, like Frat-House Aphrodite, pretty in the way television and movies and Manga have been sold to adolescent boys. They'll do, but they won't be Her. Whatever they wear, or don't.

Actually, girls, don't worry. Frat-boy artist's focused like a laser on the breast. Just don't be double-bag ugly (one for your head and one for his in case yours falls off; an old joke that made its way around Southern college campuses, maybe makes its way still).

And have good tits.

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The girls, distanced from my generation by technology and music and hairstyles, are hauntingly familiar. Like a party I'd wandered (drunk-only) away from more than thirty years ago, then stumbled back into through some strange time-slip, only to find everyone exactly where I'd left them. Just with different hair.

Why are the girls there? Why did they go, why do they, to these parties where everyone knows what happens?

Let me tell you why: because I was there too. A sheltered Southern girl eager to bust out, I was a frat-house regular by the end of my first semester. I passed out in frat houses too. Lots of girls did. Because we drank a lot, we drank too much. Frat-House Aphrodite is a demanding role, even for understudies whose faces don't quite make the cut—maybe the nose is a little wrong, or the eyes, but with enough spiked punch that can be set aside, at least for as long as the party lasts.

I was an A student, but I didn't discuss my A's at the frat house. I was there because I wanted reassurance on a certain score: that I could be a certain thing, be a certain way. The girls in the images that comprise this book are there for the same reasons.

They are there in order to reassure themselves, to perform for their peers, that they are desirable. Desired. This they want above all other things: to be desired. Maybe they are concert violinists. Maybe they rescue abused animals or tutor children. Maybe they're math whizzes or IT geniuses, but at the party they're all the same. Interchangeable in whatever uniform their generation has dictated as an integral part of desire's performance.

As somehow necessary for their own success. Nothing is enough without male approval, male desire. Any woman—or maybe I should say, any heterosexual woman; that's what I am, and therefore what I can best second-guess—who claims she's never craved being looked at the way the boys in the pictures look at the girls is lying. Where, along her own life's trajectory, she sheds that desire-to-be-desired, or second-tiers it, or relativizes it (as she, hopefully, does, or will do), is individual and culturally determined. But every woman I know, of every possible age, has had to reckon with it.

Because the desire to be desired is so powerful as to be almost elemental. Cultural messaging on this score is ubiquitous. The messaging, moreover, is in large part targeted toward women. And toward girls, from their very earliest moments of conscious personhood.

Be pretty. Be whatever else your heart desires, but above all, before all else, be pretty.

And if you're not born that way, figure out how to fake it.

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The expressions, the postures, adopted by the young men and women in the photographs are frozen in a particular moment in time—the millisecond of the shutter's click—but they are also timeless. Roles awaiting both the men and the women, as soon as they cross the threshold, as soon as they open the frat-house door.

No one had to tell them. No one had to demonstrate. Somehow the girls have arrived prepared, self-objectified, with their lessons of passivity (however temporary, only for the party, only for tonight) already internalized. Despite the messages of empowerment and equality and be anything you want to be (you can be anything!), so much more culturally audible than they ever were during my own youth and adolescence. The competing message is much louder, more strident: *be desired*.

And desire lives in the frat house.

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The boys have learned their lessons too. They know exactly how to look up at the camera, exactly what poses to adopt. Exactly how to situate a certain kind of girl on their laps.

They know that certain other kinds of girls will give them an anatomy lesson in exchange for money. Those two kinds of girls are different.

And they will become different kinds of women. One you marry, eventually; the other you don't.

The daredevils among them, though, will make sure not to lose Anatomy Lesson Girl's number. Just in case. You never know. Good times.

When the wild night's over your bros will be there for you, waiting, back at the frat house, eager to hear all about it.