

Eulogy by Jonathan Cowperthwait

I want to begin with the words of Jack Kerouac:

The only people for me are the mad ones, the who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes “Aww!”

Everytime Julia read that, it was with the same style...she started slowly and accelerated until she reached the “aww,” then she would sigh. She read it over the telephone, but you could see her pulling her cheeks into a giant smile with her eyes ablaze with laughter and excitement. She read it to me several times; eventually I was able to navigate my way through it...almost memorized. But I couldn't rush her, and I didn't dare cut her off.

Julia's breathless passion for creativity made me her co-conspirator. Convincing her parents and mine that we were off to the Lafayette Starbucks, she'd sneak us to the bookstore, the record store, the Wall Berlin Kaffehaus, the Berkeley Campanile, North Beach, the Presidio: anywhere where she could get in touch with her mind and soul. I'd end up taking the fall for the excursions that didn't go according to plan, but I didn't mind. I knew Julia was passionate in her love for her parents. And her excitement about the entire ordeal was my inspiration.

She read Dideon, Ginsberg, Faulkner, Corso, Oates, Nietzsche, Kafka, Rand...and together, crouching in the bookstore aisles, we'd read Freud and books with titles like 101 Ways to Have Grrr-eat Sex!, just so she could catch the attention of passersby and see their reactions.

But with all the other books and passages she shared, she always came back to Kerouac's exploding roman candles. Julia loved the passage because it described her ideal person. I love it because it describes her.

Julia emitted a bubbling excitement and embrace for every activity she did and every person she knew. At times she seemed like a crazy robot: nobody *human* could possibly devote herself so diligently to preparing the extra debate evidence, writing the seamless English essay, or painting the perfect box-top the Julia always did. She was ruthless and unstoppable. But Julia was also a human being with a heart who comforted, galvanized, and tickled. She was my best friend; she taught me how to love.

“Stop trying so hard,” she said. “Stop thinking. Start feeling.” As much as I think I want to be sad right now, I can't feel it. Not for long. Because Julia's doing to me now what she did when she sang along with the radio, put hand lotion on her air conditioner vents to make her car smell pretty, ate yogurt in English class, cleaned up in a debate round, or made me finger paint with her. Julia's doing to me now what she did pretty much every time I saw her:

She's making me smile.