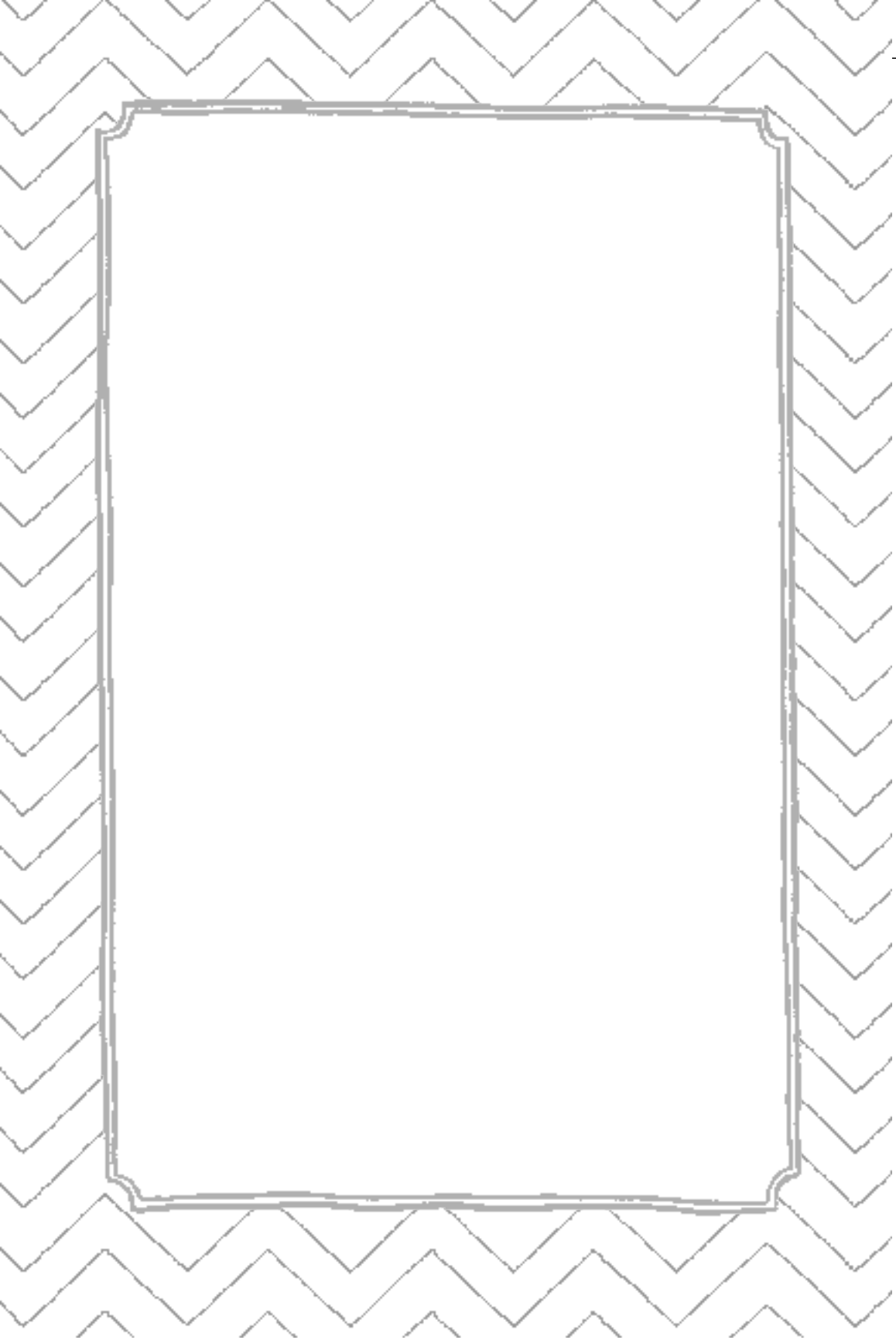


**"The first book to explain . . .
a Roth IRA and a bikini wax with equal clarity."
—ROSALIND WISEMAN, author of *Queen Bees* and *Wannabes***

THE Girl's Guide

**Getting the hang of
your whole complicated,
unpredictable, impossibly
amazing life**

MELISSA KIRSCH



AN INFORMAL MEET-AND-GREET, A LITTLE HISTORY, AND WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM HERE ON OUT

REAL WOMEN GET PAP SMEARS, EAT CAKE, AND NEGOTIATE CEASE-FIRES WITH THEIR FULL-LENGTH MIRRORS

HOW TO GET, KEEP, QUIT, CHANGE, IMPROVE, EXPLAIN, OR SURVIVE ANY JOB

**SAVING UP, CREDIT SURFING, DEBT DEMOLISHING,
RETIREMENT PLANS, AND SCADS OF OTHER FINANCIAL
STUFF NO ONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT**

**BUYING A CAR
WHY BUYING PROPERTY ISN'T
OUT OF THE QUESTION**

**HOW TO TAKE A COMPLIMENT, SOFA-CRASH
ELEGANTLY, SELECT A WEDDING GIFT, AND OTHER
PAINFUL BUT NECESSARY ESSENTIALS OF GOOD
BREEDING**

MAKE NEW FRIENDS, KEEP THE OLD, AND STILL
RESPECT YOURSELF IN THE MORNING

THE PAIN AND PLEASURE OF DATING, TALKS
ABOUT US, NON-GOAL-ORIENTED SEX, AND OTHER
CONCERNS OF THE ROMANTICALLY INCLINED

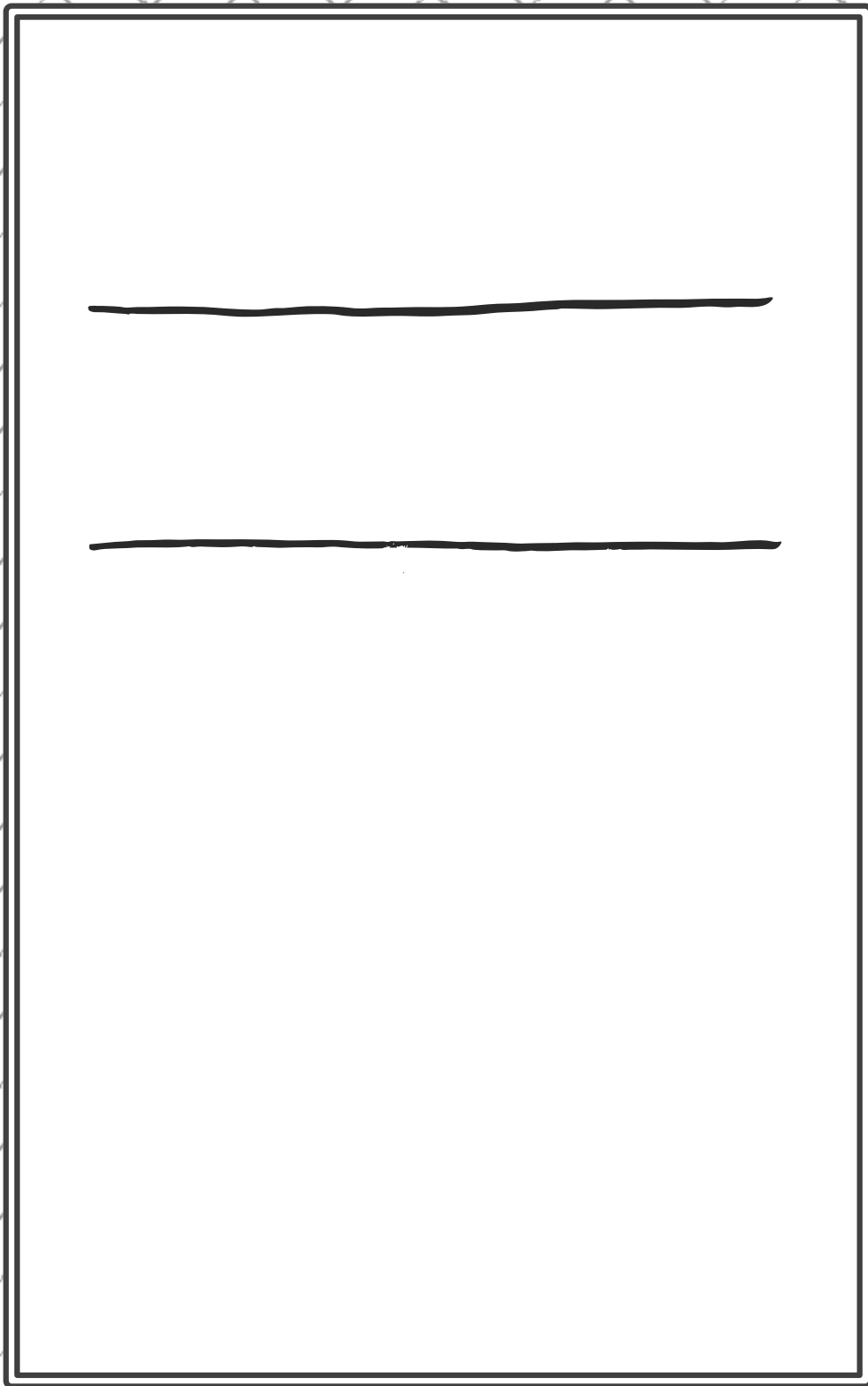
WHILE FIGURING OUT WHO YOU ARE

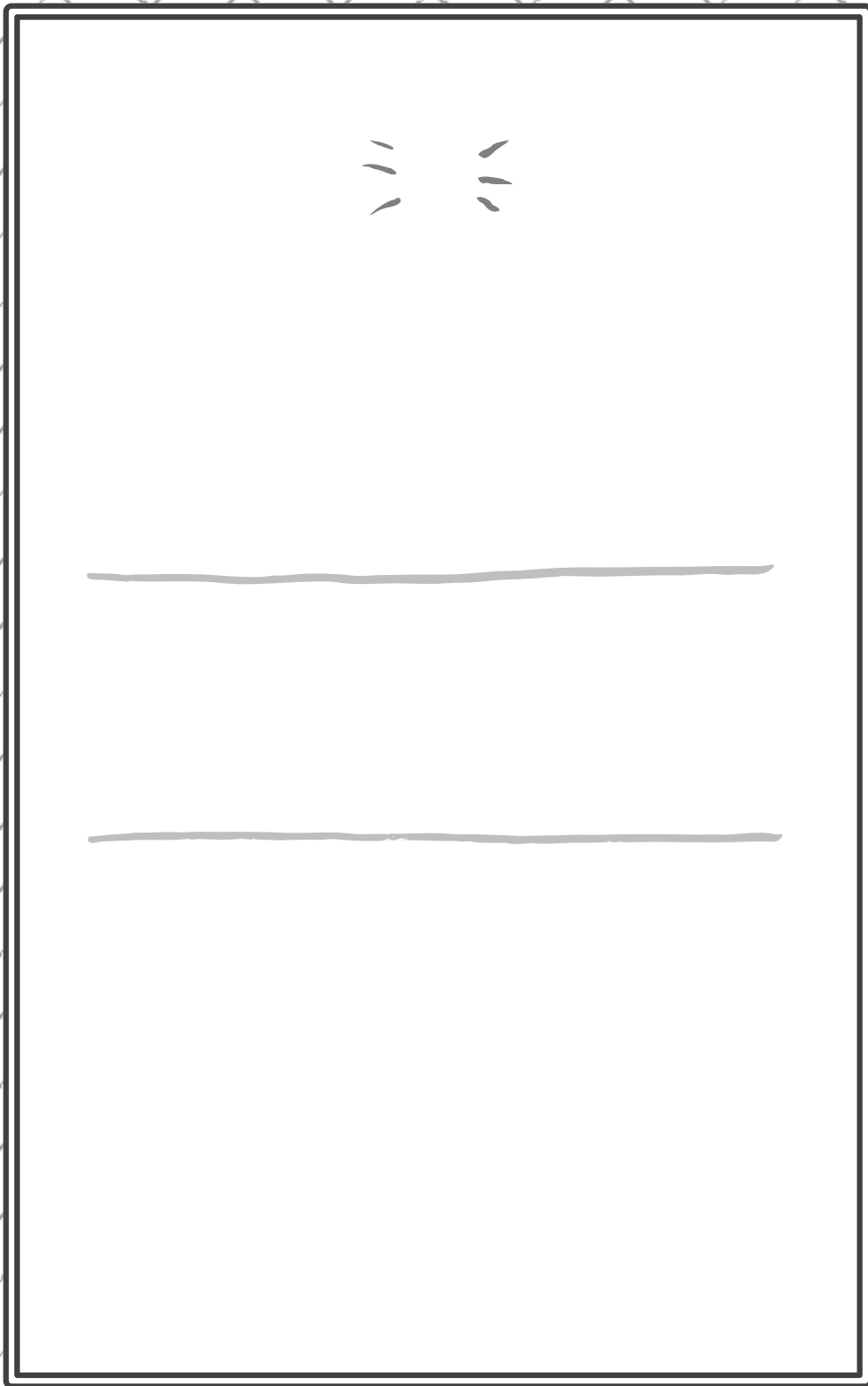
LYING ON YOUR BED AND STARING
AT THE CEILING AND OTHER PATHS
TO ENLIGHTENMENT

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OR EVERYTHING YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T
HAVE TIME TO TEACH YOU

THE PITFALLS OF PANTYHOSE,
FLIP-FLOP FELONIES, AND THE GREAT
BIKINI WAX DEBATE







Who Decides if You're “Too Thin” or “Too Fat”?

beardless, full diets, “reality” makeover shows, hologram-thin models, and actors lounging scantly in custom-made matrons on each and every magazine cover in the check-out line: You’d have to be a wooden puppet not to be affected by the perfection hucksters selling an absurdly rigid and unrealistic ideal. It can be difficult to counter all these unrealistic portrayals of women’s bodies with positive thinking and attempts to “love ourselves.” I can tell you that you look great the way you are until you blush in the face and cheeks or you’re still going to have your dentures. But what if *you* told *yourself* this, and you really meant it? Try to program your internal voice—you know, the one that’s always chattering away about the day’s events when you’re trying to fall asleep—to be kind and positive. Work on telling yourself you’re fine and trusting that this is true.

Here’s the bottom line: We have only so much time here—is it to be spent on doing things that make us like ourselves. Perhaps it’s wearing clothes that flatter our figures, or just making an effort to speak kindly to the girl in the mirror. It’s one thing to want to look good—mirrors help you. The day you leave the house wearing a belly chain—it’s another to torment yourself for not looking

like someone you’re not. Have you considered how much easier life would be if we stopped comparing ourselves to runway sets and “Formerly Made-Over” celebrities? We can’t avoid ourselves that advertisements are artificial constructions, not reality. In order to sell products, industries create images that appeal to us emotionally. You say things like, “Buy this bra and you’ll look like a Victoria’s Secret Angel!” We can choose to filter this stuff out and refuse to accept the message that the media is sending.

Psychotherapist Rita Giordano advises: “Learn to think for yourself. Start to look in the mirror and see your body as a unique work of art. Visually embrace its actual size and shape. Appreciate your own physical self. Don’t accept at face value the socially prevalent norms? Who says they’re right? Ask yourself, ‘How would my life change if the societal judgments about fat and size did not exist?’ This takes work. The goal is to catch yourself in the act of thinking negatively about your body, then to work on those thought patterns that create your self-worth. They will keep coming back, like those holiday





"I'm very flexible. Without discomfort (or even much thought) I can throw my legs up over my shoulders. I can also bend all the way over. I'll admit that I enjoy showing off now that I'm aware my body can do these things." —Vanessa, 28

"I adore my feet. I think it's pretty amazing that our behemoth bodies balance and move about on roughly twenty-eight square inches of extremely well-designed space."
—Lynn, 36

"I love that my body is a sensory vehicle through which I experience the world, especially through food. It's my immediate access to the world around me."
—Heather, 27

"I have so much power in my body. I can build things with it, I can have sex. I can create another human being. I know that I have to be comfortable enough with my body in order to have fun with it, so being comfortable is a huge priority for me." —Suzanne, 34

"I like my hands because they remind me of my grandmother. I like my hips and breasts because they suggest that I can bear children." —Stefanie, 34

"I love my freckles: If I were ever locked up in prison or a mental ward, I could entertain myself the rest of my life admiring the freckles on my arms and legs." —Rose, 30

—AMANDA, 31



Eating Disorders



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