

# Rule #1: Live with Abandon

*Life itself is the proper binge.*

In the summer of 1946, Julia McWilliams and Paul Child drove across America. A bottle of vodka and a thermos of mixed martinis rolled around the backseat of Julia's Buick. It was a time before air-conditioned vehicles and open-container laws. It was a full year before Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady went on the road. It was ten years before the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act prompted the government to build a decent interstate highway system connecting sea to shining sea. It was twenty-five years before my dad, in a rare chatty moment, offered me this piece of excellent advice: Never marry someone until you've driven cross-country with him in a car without a radio.

Paul and Julia apparently held the same belief, for that's what this trip was all about: getting the full measure of each other without any interruptions. They'd spent two years together working for the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services, during World War II, and now they needed to see if they could stop being coworkers and start being lovers.

They'd met in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Resort-like Kandy, set amid emerald-green hills and tea plantations on a balmy subtropical plateau, was possibly the most peaceful place in Asia. The environment resembled an ongoing fraternity mixer, if the fraternity was comprised of scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, military strategists, and cartographers, every weekend a flurry of cocktail parties, dinners, cocktail parties, outings, cocktail parties, sightseeing, and cocktail parties. Even